



THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

Mike Patton

Fantômas hysteria



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The Masthead

"Well, what diddy expect in an opera – a happy ending?" snaps the Bugs Bunny sample closing *Suspended Animation*, the hyperactive new album from Fantomas, the avant Metal group led by this month's cover star Mike Patton (see Phil Freeman's story on page 34). Bugs's bite was swiped from cartoon classic *What's Opera, Doc?*. Sadly, the Fantomas album shuts down before Patton gets to answer that 'toon title's question. Elsewhere, but not so far away, Patton's frequent collaborator John Zorn has just released a new studio album, called *Rituals*, that just might be tackling the opera issue full on. Described by his label Tzadik as a "strange and mystical monodrama" in five movements "for mezzo soprano and ten instruments", this extraordinary, densely compacted piece, which packs plenty of action into its 26 minutes, was composed for the Bayreuth Opera Festival in 1998, where, reports the label's Website, the premiers caused "a bit of a scandal, with the audience split down the middle – half outraged detractors stomping out, whistling and jeering, and half cheering supporters".

Sadly, further documentation of Zorn's skirmish with the world's most pigheaded music establishment is hard to come by. But the very fact that he premiered *Rituals* in Bayreuth, seat of the dynasty he preserves and

promotes the musical legacy of Richard Wagner while aggressively lauding his reputation as the vicious anti-semitic whose operas soundtracked Hitler's Third Reich, is in itself quite some spur to the imagination.

Expanding his tight ensemble of brass, woodwinds, percussion and strings with wind machines and bluefroers, and including stage directions alluding to owls and graveyarding, *Rituals* could be Zorn's way of dismantling Wagner's idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk – total artwork – and reconstructing it in a more mobile miniature form, stripped of the absurd baggage that sits so many Wagner productions. Regardless, Zorn's use of the extra-musical noise generators to accompany the wordless mezzo soprano Heather Gardner succeeds musically – for its wily contrast of cheesy, grating sound effects with an emotionally fulsome voice. The structure of Zorn's composition, meanwhile, is every bit as speedy, resourceful and witty as his 'toon composer hero Carl Stalling's telescoped symphonies. It might not have a happy ending, but surviving an encounter with the brutes of Bayreuth must be judged as a handsome victory for Zorn.

The Wagner monster is not easily destroyed, however, and his music's still seductive power is at once interrogated and exploited on a fascinating CD

called *Wagnerkomplex* on Masse Und Macht, which was mixed from eight different performances staged by Christian Von Borries and The Brandenburg State Orchestra at Berlin's Palast Der Republik in 2003. Subtitled "musique et l'identité nationale allemande", it is divided into ten movements named after significant moments in German history, from Waterloo 1815 through to the present. This particular struggle over German national identity was itself fought on the contested site of the old East German Republic's palace, which is threatened with the demolition intended to erase traces of the GDR and thereby leave the "new Germany" free to get the power politics accepted without hindrance, say the sleeve notes. Calling it a "psychogeography", von Borries mixed the Wagnerkomplex CD from looped and layered recordings of the orchestra taped from different points around the Palast. A patina of vinyl surface crackle seals the mix. The end effect is to bounce the listener between the different points in time represented by the various layers of Wagner, plus a Mahlerian march, and the political-cultural uses that continue to be made of the music. Definitely no happy endings here but it provides one hell of a hair-raising ride with the devil.

CHRIS BOWEN

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Letters

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Damn fool innocence

Re: The Anthony Braxton feature (*The Wire* 252). A nice encompassing of the contradictory Braxton's career, though one should look askance at the artist's ambivalence to his own recorded output. I remember well a *Downbeat* interview from the 70s where Braxton commented on his own damn fool innocence; he confided that he thought his first record on Delmark would sell a million copies and that he'd be received like Anton Webern. Well, William Gaddis, a man of similarly epic sensibilities, thought he'd get the Nobel Prize for his novel *The Recognition*. Ignorance of the great unwashed notwithstanding, incendiary minds tend to leave indelible marks.

By 1980, Michael Cousins had put out upwards of 35 Braxton releases (Are you sure about that? – Ed), many of them doubles. Of his Arista years, I would call attention to the high water mark of his co-ordinate musics, namely the *CADM(R) X For Four Orchestras* box set recorded at Oberlin College in 1978. The piece is quite clearly and perhaps self-consciously Webernian, as if a notebook sketch by Rubens had been taken up by an apprentice for a mural's underpainting two generations later. While Gustav Mahler regularly wrote for single orchestras much larger than the combined four at Oberlin, and many serialists have taken up the spatial aspect of sound performance (Boulez certainly with *Ensemble Intercontemporain*), Braxton is nonetheless revolutionary in conceiving of music as a temporally transforming language via the exploitation of measured time as a phenomenon, rather than a structural device. He may well have more in common with Henri Bergson than Mahler. Richard Abrams' The revolutionary endures primarily to demonstrate the proverbial canon where intellectual tension accumulates over the course of centuries, only to encounter a dramatic discovery that rebounds with the

force to shatter cosmologies and the old quantum leap. To quote Braxton from the 1978 LP box: "The solidification of multi-orchestralism cannot be viewed as an outgrowth of electronic technology because, in fact, the medium had long preceded electronic music. If anything, the reality of multi-orchestral activity forecasted the need for electronic technology because of the dynamic spatial and directional possibilities inherent in the medium."

I've been present at such Braxton ventures as the world premiere of his first symphony for percussion at Arizona State University in 1994, and many later small-unit gigs featuring him on piano in Middletown, not far from his Wesleyan office. His aim and vision can be erratic. The net effect of the journey, however, is exhilarating.

Gary Higgins via email

Beyond description

I just got Hecker's records recently, in part because of your reviews, and after listening carefully to them I felt I had to write you.

If you follow Hecker's work, which I do, you might be misled by reading *The Wire*'s reviews of these last two albums. To start with he is being described as a "glitchmeister", which seems totally inappropriate because it is wrong. What we hear are produced sounds, not glitches. Is Xenakis a "glitchmeister"? I don't think so.

Specifically, in Keith Moline's review of *Palimpsest*, Hecker's collaboration with Yasunao Tone (*The Wire* 251), stochastic processes are mentioned, when what you hear is wisest manipulation. And how do I know? Well, it is described by Hecker in the interview included in the accompanying leaflet.

In Jim Haythe's review of *PV Tracks* (*The Wire* 245), he mentions that "slight variations of Max/MSP patches, granularly deconstructed samples" are being

used, while, again, you are unable to hear them, simply because they aren't there. In both cases the focus is on the processes, softwares and applications, on how the sounds have been produced, not on the sounds themselves. Yet both err. Is it possible to read an accurate description of Hecker's sounds, or maybe that is the point?

Paco Valladares via email

Tart response

I wonder if you're going to ignore the upcoming Shadow Ring and IFCO LPs like you've done with all the other Swift Radio releases? You really missed a classic experimental LP with Tart's *Living in the Admiral*, and the last two Shadow Ring albums (*Lighthouse* and *Lindus*) have been among the most thought-provoking listens I've ever had. Let's have a ban (with maybe a few possible exceptions) on reviews of CD-Rs and give more space to quality operators like Scott Foust and co.

Ian Middleton Alva, UK

Border mayhem

A minor error found its way into Edwin Pouncey's primer on Subterranean Metal (*The Wire* 252). Mayhem and Euronymous, are, to the best of my knowledge, Norwegian and not Swedish. Thank you and goodbye, and, by the way, thanks for an excellent read!

Hemik via email, Sweden

Corrections

Issue 252 The artist in the picture accompanying the On Location review of the Progress E2.04 festival, Slovenia, is Deuce, not retro*sex*galaxy, as stated.

The Joined-up World Of The Wire

The Wire 255: on sale from 21 April

With next month's May issue, all subscribers will receive a free and exclusive copy of *Markie B 05*, a new compilation of Berlin electronics. See the inside back cover for more details.

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The new Subtle EP "The Long Vein Of The Law" is out in April 2005. The 12" EP includes two brand new songs including a collaboration with Mike Patton.



Also available: Boom Bip "Corymb". An hour of music including Peel sessions, new songs and remixes by Boards Of Canada, Mogwai, Four Tet, Lali Puna, Clouddead and V-Senses.



Also available: Hymie's Basement "Hymie's Basement" album. A collaboration between Andy Broder (Fog) and Yoni Wolf (Why? from Clouddead).

Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.
Compiled by The Trawler



Martin Denny RIP

Sad news from Hawaii – **Martin Denny**, a key figure in exotica music, has died, aged 94. Drawing on elements of Asian, South Pacific and Latin American musics, and fusing them in a cocktail lounge jazz style, Denny's recordings created a shimmering, Utopian musical mirage that proved hugely successful in the atom bomb obsessed suburbs of post-war North America, as well as exerting an influence on all manner of avant garde sound artists, from Sun Ra to Throbbing Gristle. Despite his advanced age, Denny was actively performing until shortly prior to his death.

>> Following the surprise appearance of the legendary exclusive US singer **Jarnek** at last year's Instal festival in Glasgow, promoter Barry Esson has once again persuaded the mystery man of outsider song to make the trip across the Atlantic to appear at the first edition of a three day festival that will take place in the new Sage Centre in Gateshead. Named Music Lovers Field Companion, the festival will run over three days in May and will also play host to a four hour solo set by Keji Haino, modestly titled "The Secret Of Music", during which he'll be using more than 40 instruments, plus rare UK appearances by the Italian duo My Cat Is An Alien, Japanese violinist Takeshisa Kosugi, who prefigured the likes of Suicide with the pulses and drones of his 1975 piece *Catch-Wive*, which he will be staging for the first time in a decade, and Luc Ferrari, who will perform the third in his *Tautologies* series with a group including Haino and the US duo Nimpin. See this month's Incoming column in Out There for more details. And talking of Jarnek, the Summersteps label is about to issue a tribute CD containing covers of some of his many tunes by the likes of Makoto Kawabata, The Mountain Goats, Jeff Tweedy, Six Organs Of Admittance and others.

www.summersteprecords.com >> **Jah Wobble**, the subject of a three disc retrospective last year, will be delivering a talk on the the "spiritual and material life" of London at the Lecture Theatre, Chelsea College Of Art & Design on 8 April. Born in Whitechapel and

dubbed a latterday "Cockney mystic" in the tradition of William Blake, around whose poetry he once produced a solo album, Wobble has navigated the vital arteries of London both on foot, taking lengthy walks along the Thames and its tributaries, and as an employee of London Underground during the 80s. He'll be discussing the impact that the teaming metropolis, with its multilayered history and multi-ethnic stew, has had on his work. info@cochrane-theatre.co.uk >> Having completed in 2004 the last scene of his 29 hour work *Licht*, which he commenced in 1977,

Karlheinz Stockhausen has optimistically embarked upon a similarly massive piece, based on the 24 hours of the day. On 5 May the Milan Cathedral will host the world premiere of *Erekte Stunde (First Hour)*, the first instalment of *Klang Sound*. Composed for organ (or optional synthesizer), soprano and tenor, it will feature examples of Stockhausen's experimental attempts to "rhythimize the one-dimensional musician two dimensionally", as the two hands of the organist constantly play in different temp. Meanwhile, also in May, the German composer will be making an ultra rare UK appearance headlining this year's Triptych festival, which takes place across three Scottish cities, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. For details of its full programme, go to www.triptych05.com, where you will also find some of the 'wee Scottish beasts' that have been specially drawn for this year's event by The Wire's very own Savage Pencil >> **Axel Dörmér** is known as a tireless collaborator in experimental music, working with the likes of Keith Rowe. His style exploring the very grain of the valve of the instrument. However, he also has a taste for bebop, and makes up a group comprising Alexander Von Schlippenbach, Rudi Mahaj, Jan Rodder and Uli Jennesen who in 2003 and 2004 faithfully rendered all 73 tunes in the Thelonious Monk songbook over four nights at c-terrain in Berlin. The entire results are now available on Monk's Casino, a three CD set on Intakt. www.intaktrec.ch >> Although now retired, electroacoustic pioneer **Tod Dockstadter**

has apparently enjoyed a new lease of life in his mid-seventies. Following Pond, his recent collaboration with David Lee Myers, he now issues the first in what will be a three-part project entitled *Ariel* on Sub Rosa, which sees him use a computer in earnest for the first time. The results, in which 59 studio mixes of short-wave atmospheres bleed into one another, are profoundly different in character from earlier works like *Eight Electronic Pieces*, darker, torrential, more expansive. www.subrosa.net >> **Legendary Berlin Techno club Tresor** is celebrating its last days in Leipzigerstrasse due to office block development. After 14 years of clubbing they will host a goodbye festival in the two first weeks of April. They hope to resurrect the club at a later date in a new locale.

www.tresorberlin.com >> Austrian art group **Sabotage** recently found that their art had been confiscated by US security. Created for a Contemporary Art Center museum exhibit, their passports for SoS – State of Sabotage, their invented "micronation" – were confiscated at the airport in Detroit after a customs agent thought they might be harmful if imported. The items, taken from Vienna artist Robert Jalinek's luggage, included what the government described as "fantasy passports", along with ink pads, rubber stamps and ink, reports Sabotage.

www.sabotage.at/sos >> The UK's **Contemporary Music Summer School (CoMA)** has announced its 2005 programme. Taking place at Bretton College in Yorkshire between 23-26 July, the school offers a range of composition, improvisation and performance opportunities catering for all abilities. Music written this year especially for CoMA includes pieces by John Paul Jones, John Cage collaborator Stephen Montague, Michael Nyman, Frederic Rzewski and others. Montague will be also teaching scores and experimental composition while sound artist Will Menter will look at sonic sculpture and environmental sound, among numerous other activities. More information and application forms at coma.org. □



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ACTON WOMAN, BY DAVID STUBBS



"I got the bombs to make you blow/I got the bizz to make you bang," raps Maya Arulpragasam, aka M.I.A. (Missing In Action), on "Pull Up The People" (from her new album *Arular*), a rough tumble of low budget, high octane Techno/dancehall, all strobing synths and a squaggy Moog that attaches itself to you like a leech. It's hard to discuss M.I.A.'s music without occasionally falling into the language of the combat zone; moreover, in interviews, the words "guerrilla-style" tumble frequently from M.I.A.'s lips. From anyone else hammering on the peripheries of the UK dance scene, such phrasing might seem like overheated, thoroughly inappropriate rhetoric in wartime times. For M.I.A., however, the phrase has personal resonance: she's a Tamil refugee from the Sri Lankan civil war, whose father was a liberation fighter and whom she barely saw, whose cousin died in the armed struggle for Tamil independence. "I feel we've been robbed of the word 'revolutionary' because I really like that word," she complains. "In this world, if you're fighting for freedom, for independence, you're no longer a revolutionary, you're a terrorist. It's a tag put on by America."

M.I.A. certainly knows terror – some of her earliest life memories were of running for her life in war-stricken Sri Lanka. So when her family finally escaped to England in 1986, the taunts she received from local racists on the rough South London council estate where she first landed up were more bemusing than distressing to this already battle-hardened child. "They'd call me 'Paki'," she recalls. "I used to think, 'I don't get it, I'm a Tamil. My life would have been so much better if I'd come from Pakistan!'"

M.I.A.'s family eventually settled in a more ethnically mixed neighbourhood, sandwiched between a rowdy Irish family and a black family. When her house was burgled and their radio stolen, the only sounds available to M.I.A. were the muffled, heavy beats booming through the walls from next door. What might be the ultimate in sink estate misery for some proved to be an epiphany for M.I.A. She had discovered Public Enemy. "Through a wall, that's how I first heard them," she remembers. "I thought, 'What the hell's that?' And I was really impressed by the boys who used to roll up next door – I thought they were very

rowdy but very cool. I loved that there was no prejudice with this scene – all you had to do was understand the beat. That was one of my first positive insights."

M.I.A.'s first artistic forays were into the visual, however – a lifelong flair for drawing and painting eventually landed her a scholarship at London's St Martin's College. However, she was deflected by what she saw as the remote, ethereal world of the arts, although she did make an important connection with Justine Frischmann of *Elastica*, who commissioned her to do some sleeve work. Through Frischmann she met Peaches, who encouraged her to make music, and even loaned her a cheap Roland 505 Groovebox. It was on this that she made her first recording, substituting tesse on conventional musical abstractions, more on extraordinary resourcefulness and a sense of purpose and identity, bolstered following a trip to Sri Lanka to investigate the plight of the Tamils and to follow up rumours, sadly unfounded, that her cousin, reported dead, was still alive.

Following two successful singles, "Galangana" and "Sunshowers", and considerable media attention as she signed to XL, home also to Dizzee Rascal among others, M.I.A. has cut her debut album *Arular*, a salute to her father, who still doesn't know of her musical career. Despite a raft of big-name producers, the album sounds gratifyingly free of mall-slick, reflecting M.I.A.'s avowed "cut and paste, bish and bosh" philosophy. "It was meant to sound rough," she says. "The idea was to work with what I started out with, a 505, rather than have something over-produced. It's to show that all you need is £100 worth of equipment: it's OK to be 'cheap', rather than spend millions on what ends up being bubblegum music."

Arular is full of eugenicist and street tumble, glove-off, shoes-off stuff that makes Dizzee Rascal sound positively pernicked – its raw, unabashed amateurism belies a gift for melody, well-sculpted backbeat and juxtaposition of improbable pan-cultural and global elements. The opening skit, on learning to speak the word "Ba-na-na", is sarky and sassy. Having absorbed UK culture in double-quick time, flitting from homeland to Timbaland on the peg-legged raga-step of "Fire, Fire", she goes it right back; the album is splatted with

deliberately mundane lyrical Britisms like Colgate, Kate Moss ads, mobile texting and Scrabble, all rendered in facetious migrant Cockneyese and brazen patois.

But it's also global in its reach, a counter to the miserably monoglot nature of Britmusic, reflecting the sensibility of one who's been thrust all over the world, including the Caribbean, where, visiting relatives, she was scolded for clapping off the rhythm during mass. Patois and Delhi mingle with carefree absurdity on "Dash The Curry". "Hombre" starts out in Indian rage style, a musical red herring, as she skips into a cod-Latino lyrical chant. "Amazon" is a humed, beat-wrecked fantasy about being kidnapped, with a poignant shout out you could imagine was to her estranged dad ("Hello? This is M.I.A./Could you please come and get me?"). "Sunshowers" even boasts an Alvin Lucier *I Am Sitting In A Room*-style moment, as M.I.A.'s vocals on the chorus are ghosted by a poorer grade recording of the same refrain. Hauling old Kraftwerk and 80s electro jam-making devices off the scrapheap and welding them to cheap, vinyl 21st century bargain basement Techno, is magnificently makeshift, reflecting M.I.A.'s capacity to improvise with the little she's got, which came in handy during one of her first gigs, a PA in Berlin. "I really had to hit the ground running. There was a French DJ there who wasn't following what I was doing at all, the system malfunctioned, both the vinyl and CD starting skipping, the whole thing was a shambles. So in the end, I turned the thing into a stand-up routine with the audience, just made the best of it. And in the end, I got three encores."

M.I.A. isn't above trading on her combat 'credentials' – she namechecked the PLO on "Sunshowers", to the consternation of MTV. But she's also aware of the lund, chic fascination for the sartorial aspects of liberation struggle, the gap between the Gap and reality. "I remember the first time I revisited Sri Lanka since we left and I was shopping around just looking around for casual, comfy clothes. And every shop I went to, it was camouflage, khaki, all that fake combat gear. There was no way I could wear that sort of thing in Sri Lanka. All those clothes are banned, I'd have been shot." □ *Arular* is out now on XL

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C-SCHULZ

THE FLICKER EFFECT. BY KEITH MOLINE



"I'm getting carried away." Prompted by a speculative question about his relationship to the various ideological strands that have run through music in Cologne for the last half century, C-Schulz is on a bit of a rant. "If you read about the decades-long 'war' between the Cologne school and the movement of *musique concrète* — for me it's just to laugh at," he continues. "This dusty academic thinking is really absurd." Nor is his ire released for the music scene. "In the visual arts it seems like there is more open space for 'outsider' and genius dilettantism than in the field of academic music. But of course the commercial art business is also disgusting." Carsten Schulz is well placed to cast a critical eye over such matters. Not only has he just released the album, *5 Flicker Tunes* (Song), which blurs the boundaries of academic and popular electronic music forms to such a degree that such terms become meaningless, he's also been at the centre, or thereabouts, of Cologne's evolving, exploratory cultural scene as a musician and film maker for more than 15 years.

As a music student, already comfortable with the music of Ives, Kagel and others via his participation as oboist in an orchestra, he formed longstanding alliances with fellow students Marcus Schmickler (now of Pluramon), Georg Odijk and Frank Dornert, who went on to set up their own labels dedicated to documenting the nascent experimental Cologne scene of the early 90s. Indeed, Dornert released the first C-Schulz album *20.Hose Horn* on his *Entenputzli* label in 1993.

The openness of early Techno was of crucial importance to the development of Schulz's ideas. "We had a great DJ Team in Cologne — Cosmic Orgasm," he enthuses. "They organised weird parties and besides the strong body experience with dancing, all the drugs and Techno attitudes, they sometimes experimented with the bare needles of the turntables at the end of such nights. It was fascinating. Of course nowadays Techno is as commercial as any other genre, but it seemed like a lot of things were possible at that time."

There were important new arrivals as well. Hans-Jürgen Schunk (aka Hajack) and Monika Westphal

completed the line-up of the seminal improvisational sextet *Kontakta*, whose sole release on *Odd Sine* in 1993 doesn't really do justice to the enormous influence they had on the local scene. Following their dissolution, Schulz formed the trio *POL*, whose most satisfying release was a 1995 soundtrack to extreme film maker Birgit Hein's *Baby I Will Make You Sweat* (*Odd Sine*).

An important result of their collaboration was that it sparked Schulz's interest in a different, though related creative discipline. "I began to study visual arts, very late. I was 27. I concentrated on experimental film." It is an interest that Schulz has pursued concurrently with his music ever since, usually alongside his partner Christina Von Greve, who supplies an affecting, dreamlike video for the new album's "Swelan".

With the likes of Jan St Werner, Joseph Suchy and FX Randomix relocating to Cologne in the early 90s, it's understandable that the city began to take on an almost mythic status. Viewed from afar, the scene seemed to embody a bridging of the gap between Cologne's illustrious musical past and a vibrant electronic future. Schulz is a little more circumspect in his evaluation. "Of course," he sighs, "it is a great journalistic topic, 'Electronic Cologne', the town of Can and Stockhausen, the godfather of Techno. But it had nothing to do with the electronic scene of the 50s and 60s. And I don't believe that anybody from the scene today sees themselves in the tradition of Can."

Schulz has since retreated somewhat from the centre of things. He says, "The film work takes a lot of time and I'm not very fast at making music. I started to make music with Hajack, but I was no longer that present in the Cologne scene." Though little solo work was forthcoming, the Hajack collaborations (released in 2000 on *Song*) represented a distillation of Schulz's musical methods, which reach full expression on *5 Flicker Tunes*. "For the new album," he says, "I worked a lot with flickering structures, in the use of instruments and other acoustic elements. For example a lot of

electronic sounds have been transformed by the rhythmic structure of helicopters." I compliment him on the skilful balance of real and synthetic elements on the album. Some fine performances are coaxed from instrumentalists of the calibre of Harald 'Sack' Ziegler on French horn, Kornelia Bittman on violin, as well as Jan St Werner and Andi Toms of *Mouse On Mars*. "I was always interested in the combination of real acoustic instruments and electronic sounds," he explains. "I used different sound sources, ranging from concrete sounds to abstract electronic elements. Some sounds were processed a lot, for example I used a lot of Vocoder treatments." It sounds like a pretty rigorous process, I suggest. Schulz disagrees. "My way to create music involves a lot of experiments, improvisations and dead ends."

The album demonstrates an interest in microtonal music, the exploitation of 'the notes between the notes'. "The right tuning of the acoustic material is indeed important for my work," Schulz concurs. "A few cents up or down in the tuning could change the mood of the piece or a single sound completely." Is he a fan of classical composers who explore microtonal intervals — the Spectralists, Lou Harrison, etc? "I do like some microtonal academic music," he admits. "Some pieces by Schoenberg. But I have difficulties with the hyper-expressivity of them. In general I would say the tuning of music in the Western tradition, in classical as well as in pop music, is not the one and only possibility."

For someone who doesn't consider himself to be at the centre of things so much these days, Schulz is a busy man. A regular plunderphonics radio show with *FX Randomix* has led to an album, currently in production. He is also working on a film place with Von Greve in the tradition of the flicker films of Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad. And the obos? "Over the years I've got a bit bored with the sound of obos," he moans. "Always the same melancholic mood. And because I haven't been practising I'm no longer any good at playing it." □ *5 Flicker Tunes* is out now on *Song*

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VENETIAN SNARES



"I've already sold my body for 2005 Snares releases," confesses a fan, junky-style, on Venetian Snares's online blog. A little extreme, but then compulsion and intoxication are the essence of the aggressive sound made by Canadian maverick drill 'n' jazz producer Venetian Snares, aka Aaron Funk (he insists his surname is genuine). He seamlessly solders battering breakcore to a glut of samples sucked from classical, opera and jazz recordings. His latest album *Rossz Csillag Alatt Született* (Planet Mu), for example, includes unrecognizable chunks of Bartók, Billie Holiday and Elgar. And as he explains, it's not only his fans that hooey this stuff up like a drug.

"For a period I would literally do crack all night and then after I came down I'd sleep a couple hours, get up and do music," he explains. "I would twist the music until it gave me that same rush I got from the crack, that full euphoric adrenalin blast. Bit of a dangerous experiment but a couple of wicked 12's came as a result. Those were strange days."

Winnipeg born Venetian Snares looks like — and in many ways functions like — a Canadian Aphex Twin. And, like the Twin, he enjoys a fervent fanbase, practises "luck dreaming" as a creative tool, is profuse in his output (*Rossz...* is his 12th studio album in five years) and is relentlessly innovative with his sound (and, yes, the snare drum does form a fundamental part of it). While the Canada rave and gabba scene make up his formative background, he cites his mother's underground punk collection, his gran's piano and a young curiosity with chopping up and recording sound (using two ghetto blasters) as key to his musical development.

Snares's debut release, *Shiver* in *Eternal Darkness*, was an EP on the Isolate label, followed by *Doll Doll Doll* (Hymn) and *Get Meets Car Culture* (History Of The Future). When Planet Mu's Mike Paradinas heard the latter, he badgered Snares to sign. He still continues to record for a variety of labels, including

Hymn (who put out the highly collectable 3" *With A Giant Alien Force More Violent & Sick Than Anything You Can Imagine*, which came exquisitely packaged with a plastic model of a 50s TV set), and has also recorded as Snares Man! and Sonetian Vnares.

The widespread acceptance of Venetian Snares's output may reflect a latent desire beyond the hardcore IDM community for (dance) music more violated than ever before. The thirst for nasty, adrenalin fuelled noise perhaps befits a time where Western civilisation nudges further onto the precipice of a severed dissonant reality with the rest of the world. "I suppose, as they say, the state of art is reflecting the state of society, a sort of cultural gauge. I would agree with this to some degree. What you cannot deny is this constant debate: what is art and what is not art? and in this case, what is music and what is noise? It seems there will always be people who want to challenge these definitions and as a result this act challenges conventional ideologies."

But then even Snares has his limits. Not for him the excruciating, vomit-inducing noise exploration of HijoKaidan, for instance. "Yeah, puking and shitting does not make for a good party, but that's just me," he avers. "For me, the music I make is beautiful but for someone else it could be far too extreme. They can't handle this overwhelming beauty." And it is an overwhelming beauty. On first listen, Snares's famously caustic breaks, infurating stutters in tempo, and spattered spit-stom rhythms are foreground elements. But there has always been a fragility there: as the singing noise evaporates, it leaves heart-wrenching melodies to soar in its place.

This juxtaposition of the extremes of the musical palette comes to the fore on *Rossz* (the Hungarian title means *Born Under A Bad Star*), which stitches folk songs, classical works, original orchestral arrangements (including Snares's own violin playing) into his trademark backdrop of shuddering anti-

rhythms. The concept was brought on by an emotionally charged moment when Snares was on tour in Hungary and visited the Károlyi Palota (Budapest's Royal Palace). His musings on a pigeon's viewpoint of the world (later consolidated in a poem published on the CD artwork) ignited the project, while heartbreak, which he won't speak about, informed the mood. It's "the dissonant barrage of colossal sorrow," as he puts it. Fittingly, he covers the "Hungarian Solitude Song" or "Gloomy Sunday" (with Illille Holiday on vocals). Snares later discovered that Rossz Snares, who originally wrote it in 1933, killed himself by jumping from his building. "Perhaps he thought he was a pigeon?" he asks rhetorically.

This song title, like all the pieces on the album, is in Hungarian. As Snares's most emotionally bare record yet, this is telling. Reticent about talking to the press, he hates talking about his music. "I think a lot of music and art is beyond language and titles," he declares. "In that case, titles become irrelevant and in the case of *Rossz Csillag Alatt Született*, I do like the fact that language is one step removed. I do feel that I like my music to speak for itself, to have whatever impact it does have on someone solely from the music itself, not clouded by whatever I or anyone else says. There's a sort of impurity there. That said, I would go as far as to say even the act of releasing my music is a mutilation of its true intent."

Maybe so, but he admits that its impact is unmistakable. "I guess we're doing an accurate job of expressing myself," he concedes. "I see art as the bridge between artist and listener, a transference of ideas, energy, emotion, everything. It's the same in all art, you have never met Picasso, but you stand and stare into his Weeping Woman, where he once stood, and you feel it. I am very addicted to my own music, so if others become addicted, I have truly succeeded in transferring that onto them." □ *Rossz Csillag Alatt Született* is out now on Planet Mu

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RICHARD BARRETT

MILITANT TENDENCIES, BY PHILIP CLARK

With titles like *Negative*, *Dark Matter*, *lost and NO*, it's clear why militant composer Richard Barrett has long existed at an oblique angle to the 'niceness' of the British contemporary music scene. Barrett went into voluntary exile in Amsterdam in 1993. Now residing in Berlin, he has subsequently found his work taken up enthusiastically by internationalist performers such as Ensemble Modern and The Arditti Quartet, rather than by more insular British musical institutions.

Musically, Barrett's forefathers are composers from the more 'note-heavy' side of the fence. A formative encounter with Michael Finnissy's bruising 1979 ensemble piece *Alongside* had a galvanising impact, and the two composers with whom Barrett finds himself habitually compared and linked are Iannis Xenakis and Brian Ferneyhough. Hard left politics and the writings of Samuel Beckett are the other key ingredients in Barrett's aesthetic make-up and, rarely for a British 'manuscript paper' composer, he also maintains a parallel career as an improviser. His live electronic duo FURT, founded in 1986 with Paul Oermayer, is an important vehicle for driving towards another way of perceiving sound. It also feeds directly into his notated scores. Audiences at last year's Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (reviewed in *The Wire* 252) heard FURT's latest direction, as Barrett and Oermayer implanted themselves inside Evan Parker's work with Barry Guy and Paul Lytton.

Barrett was in the UK again in February to attend performances of his latest piano piece *lost* (played by Ian Pace) and an ambitious new orchestral work for The BBC Symphony Orchestra, *NO* (resistance and vision part 2). Now 45, Barrett is at that difficult age for a composer when youthful revolutionary idealism can merge into mainstream posturing. The gentle, reflective sounds of *lost* – in notable contrast to his 1989 piano gangbang *Tract* – has led some to suggest that he has gone soft. In fact, the disorientating structure of *lost* sets up expectations that it confounds. Barrett's structures still say 'fuck you' to those who need to be sworn at. *NO* is more problematic. Composers of an experimental bent who deal with stubborn, institutionalised orchestral musicians rarely emerge well. Barrett wants *NO* to

resist outmoded orchestral practice by unlicking orchestral hierarchies and offering a vision of something better.

"I'm taking the orchestra apart," he explains, describing the process of composing *NO*. "Its components are the instruments themselves and their groupings, and I put those together into different combinations. Instruments might, for example, be combined in terms of their pitch register rather than their timbre, so the timbre in a given register constantly changes as it moves from one instrument to another. Each individual in the orchestra then has an obvious part to play during at least one point in the piece within the ongoing musical continuity. The solos are not just for the first flute."

He issued a Marxist programme note to accompany the piece, complete with a condemnation of the Iraq war. It caused one newspaper critic to snipe that there were more fervour in the note than in the music. Surely that title and the note constitute a high-risk act of provocation? "I kept coming back to the title after abandoning it a few times," Barrett admits, "because I thought maybe it's a little too brash and this is not a brash piece. But it was a way to think about music in more explicitly social and political terms than I had done previously. Music which encourages through its very nature the deployment of intelligence on behalf of the audience is already a strong political statement within itself."

"A symphony orchestra is obviously a rather conservative musical institution, surrounded by rules and regulations for composers, performers and audiences which are very difficult to shake," he adds. "The challenge is to take apart that very rigidly structured performing ensemble and to put it together in different recombinations. But from a more optimistic point of view, it's interesting that the orchestra is one of few examples there are of a large number of people having to collaborate with pretty much split-second timing in the process of achieving a common aim."

But isn't orchestral life – musicians obliged to play music they often dislike, for rotten pay – a form of serfdom? "Well, what should one's response to that problem be? The vast majority of orchestral music

written today takes the path of least resistance when it comes to treating musicians as individuals. Orchestral traditions become fossilised in the past and it's unnecessary for orchestral musicians to even listen, only to follow the conductor and stay more or less together with their immediate neighbours. Pretty much everything else is the responsibility of the conductor."

In his work with Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin, Barrett has experimented with developing pieces during an extended rehearsal period and then boiling down all the information needed for a 20 minute performance to a single sheet of paper. This halfway house between improvisation and composition allows FURT to impact into other areas.

"FURT's at a particular moment in its evolution where we might play a completely improvised set," says Barrett, "but more often we play something more akin to a composition. Through improvisation we make a sound structure that's incorporated into the piece, played by a third computer controlled by both Paul's and my keyboards. That's the sonic backbone to the composition, and it can be stopped and started at any point. There's no great mystery about this, but actually the mystery comes when we listen back. It not only becomes impossible to tell which sounds are part of the structural backbone and which are improvised, it's also impossible to tell who played what. Although our styles of playing might be slightly divergent when we're in other contexts, FURT actually has a musical personality of its own. It's interesting that when the duo become embedded within other ensembles, especially our work with Evan, Paul and I function very much as a single entity within the group."

"Many people from within the improvised music world are very forthright in saying that the making of improvised music is necessarily a more revolutionary act than composing a score which is then interpreted by musicians, because the notated score implies a hierarchy between composer and performer," Barrett observes. "If you view the composer/performer relationship simply in terms of giving and receiving orders, it's easy to come to such conclusions. I may be deluding myself, but I genuinely don't see it in that way." □ FURT's *Dead Or Alive* is out on PSI



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A SURVEY OF SOUNDS FROM AROUND THE PLANET.

THIS MONTH: ANA GARCIA MAPS OUT A HYBRID UNDERGROUND SCENE AROUND THE EL ROCHA STUDIO IN BRAZIL'S SOUTHERN STRONGHOLD

SÃO PAULO



Brazilian bacchanals: Hurtmold's Mauricio Takara (trumpet), Rogério Martins (clarinet) and Manoel Gêze (bass)

"People know São Paulo just as a huge uncontrollable city, it's tense and chaotic," says Daniel Takara, aka Gangnam, producer and musician from HipHop collective Instituto. Takara is speaking from the porch of his El Rocha studio – on Vila Madalena, São Paulo's most bohemian neighbourhood – which he set up with his two brothers, Fernando Sanches and Mauricio Takara. "They're usually astounded when they find out what we are doing, but the music scene here has been going on for years and I am proud to be part of it." São Paulo has always been overshadowed by the samba and bossa nova from Rio De Janeiro and Bahia, but Takara and co are instrumental in a new wave of sound bursting out of the city, and few places better exemplify the city's musical singularity than the torrent of sounds emerging from El Rocha.

Over the past ten years, the studio has played host to a wide range of musicians, including MC Marcelo D2, folkloric group Nação Zumbi, dub producer/musician Victor Rice and reggae singer Glen Brown. It has also provided a stable base from which a number of diverse artists have begun to break through the underground: improvisors Hurtmold, M Takara, Space Invaders and Cidadão Instigado; hardcore acts Polara, Agnate and Descarga; and rock outfits Forgotten Boys, Van Damien and Hidra. Most importantly, El Rocha has united disparate local creativity under one roof, assembling a collective of musicians that are listed in the credits of almost every release coming out of this part of the city.

The initial idea was to find a small place where the Takara brothers could rehearse their own groups. At that time, Daniel Takara was 16 and playing piano and guitar in five different groups, which ranged from dub to minimal rock and discordant white noise. 14 year old Fernando was already playing guitar, while Mauricio, 12, was mastering the drums. Together they formed Small Talk. "My father wanted to create the recording studio because he was unemployed and has always been involved with music," explains Daniel. "But it was very natural for us to be involved in it too,

because we were always playing in so many different bands and we were exposed to instruments and sound equipment very early on. I mean, we were already listening to Pink Floyd, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, samba and bossa nova. And all these synths, guitars, busses, pianos were lying around while we were growing up. The idea became reality when my dad decided to buy the drums."

Although the three brothers are involved in a number of groups that are well known outside of São Paulo, Daniel and Fernando agree that Mauricio has produced the best work in the studio. "He's been involved with the Brazilian music scene since he was eight years old," recalls Daniel. "At that age he had a band with my other brother called Los Quatro Amigos – they would hit cars to simulate a drum. At 14, he was already one of the best drummers on the scene. It was bizarre." Since then, Mauricio has learned how to play a variety of instruments, such as percussion, vibraphone, trumpet, guitar, bass and computer; and he has collaborated with Otto and Instituto.

In 1998, Mauricio formed the avant jazz rock group Hurtmold with five friends who shared a common love for groups like Silt, Fugazi, Tortoise and Chicago Underground. Hurtmold's instrumental tracks combine rock instrumentation with hand percussion, clarinet, vibraphone, harmonica and sampler. So far they have recorded three albums, most recently *Mestre*, and a split CD with Chicago trio The Eternals, all on Submarine Records. The split release led both groups to tour all over south eastern Brazil. At Sonar Sound – São Paulo's smaller version of the Spanish multimedia festival Sonar – Hurtmold were joined on stage by improvising cornettist and electronic musician Rob Mazurek, who has relocated to Brazil from Chicago.

In 2003, Mauricio created more abstract electronics and minimal rock on his solo album *M Takara* (Submarine). Last year he finished recording his second release on Sig Records. He also worked in a free improvisation duo with saxophonist Tomas Rhorer and took part in an installation called *Dragaúdio* at

the Restfest Digital Film Festival. Earlier this year, he toured Poland and Germany with Hurtmold guitarist Fernando Capel, unveiling a more organic sound.

El Rocha continues to uncover fresh wonders, such as the MC/producer Akin, who has spent the last few years collaborating with local musicians and creating the label D Ataque Da Raça Humana (DARH). He was also a member of Academia Brasileira De Rimas – Brazil's first freestyling group. Together with Hurtmold and other friends, they created Chaka Hot Nights, an event that includes traditional DJing, live music and Akin on the mic.

São Paulo is also home to Open Field, an improvising collective that have not only been releasing records by Krautrock-style group Vurta, but also organising after-hours sessions at Mito's Garage, a small venue where you can listen to the most varied DJ sets and other jams. One recent performer was Carlos Issa, a guitarist who expanded his theatre piece *Objeto Amarelo* into a series of improvised shows and noisy home recordings on Bizarre Music. His shows have caused extreme reactions, but Issa just laughs it off. "São Paulo is very amusing," he declares. "It has 6500 rockers on the streets defending Kiss. Try to steal a Kiss record out of a DJ's case and see what happens – the night finishes in death. But the suspicious looks when a laptop appears on stage are hilarious. The laptop can be much more aggressive than a dozen fuzz pedals."

São Paulo is becoming one of those places many artists move to in search of success or new sources of inspiration. Groups like Cidadão Instigado and Nação Zumbi, both from the north east of the country (where there's more respect for popular culture) have been living most of the year in São Paulo and transplanting their sound into its culture – such as it is. As Hurtmold's Guilherme bluntly puts it, "It's a city without defined cultural characteristics – there is a mix of everything, and this can be attractive for artists when they want to produce, without having to justify their own sound." □ www.submarinerecords.net

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IRA COHEN

TESTED BY EDWIN COHEN
PHOTOS BY JOHN H. COHEN



Ira Cohen is a New York based poet, photographer, film maker and traveller whose work is deeply ingrained in the US counterculture of the late 1960s and early 70s. Born in 1935 to deaf parents, he first learned how to communicate by sign language. In 1961 he travelled to Tangier where he edited and published *Gnauoa*, a one-off magazine devoted to exorcism, which introduced early work by William Burroughs, Brion Gysin and photographer/film maker Jack Smith. During the same period Cohen published *The Hashish Cookbook* and produced an LP of trance music by a dervish sect recorded by Gysin and author/composer Paul Bowles.

Returning to New York in the late 60s, Cohen turned his attention to photography. He created his legendary mylar portraits, photographing his subjects inside a reflective chamber. The images perfectly mirrored the mood of the psychedelic era, and Cohen made mylar portraits of Burroughs, Angus MacLise, John McLaughlin, the rock group Spirit, as well as Jimi Hendrix, who remarked that looking at Cohen's mylar images was "like looking through butterfly wings". In a more theatrical vein, Cohen directed his "phantasmagorical" short film *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* with his own Universal Muntz Repertory Company, and produced *Paradise Now In America*, a documentary of The Living Theater's 1968 American tour.

In 1970 Cohen travelled to Kathmandu and set up his Slipstreams Poetry Series under the Bardo Matrix imprint, publishing small volumes of poetry and broadsides by such writers as Gregory Corso, Charles Henri Ford, Bowles and MacLise, as well as his own work.

In the 80s he travelled to Ethiopia, Japan and India, where he made *Kings With Straw Mats*, a film about the 1986 Kumbh Mela festival in Haridwar. In 1994 he produced a CD, *The Majoon Traveller* (Sub Rosa), with San Francisco DJ Cheb I Sabbah mixing his readings with Jouskou and Jilala trance music, as well as works by Don Cherry and Ornette Coleman.

Now resettled in New York, Cohen continues to publish his own writings and poetry. His latest projects include *Shamanic Warriors Now Poets and Celestial Graffiti*, both anthologies of writings, paintings, photos, collages and drawings; and *Whatever You Say May Be Held Against You*, a book of poems.

The Jukebox took place at London's October Gallery.

THOMAS CHATTERTON "AN EXCELENTE BALADE OF CHARITIE: AS WRITEN BIE THE GODE" FROM CLOUPETRY.COM 1777

This piece is a printed verse from a famous poem. [After reading for a few minutes] This is, of course, Chatterton, who is one of the most wonderful poets in the history of English literature – you should be so proud of him. I don't know how well known he is today, but he is actually the doorway to the Romantic movement. And the idea that he wrote these fake poems by his made-up "Mr Rowley", the Rowley poems? And was able to convince people in Bristol enough. He started writing these poems at the age of 12, I mean it's unbelievable. I have a poem of his that I carry in a notebook, and it's supposed to be the letter that he put in his pocket when he killed himself. Though he had some success as a poet and in journalism, when he first came to London from Bristol as a young kid, he was really living on the edge of starvation. He's the beginning and the end of the Romantic movement. Keats wrote a poem called "Endymion", which he dedicated to Chatterton.

What attracts you to his work and personality?
The promise he showed and the tragedy. What brought him to my attention first was the fact that my friend Veli Myers [the late Australian fantasy painter] loved Chatterton above anybody else. Especially because he was a young boy and, like her, he had red hair. Then there's the famous portrait [by Henry Wallis] of him lying dead on the couch in his garret. But I also read Peter Ackroyd's novel about Chatterton, which I found interesting. Anything about Chatterton is just amazing. He is the English Rimbaud. Rimbaud belongs to another century but his work was done, like Chatterton's, before he was 20, and he's the greatest voice in French poetry. One can't quite say the same thing about Chatterton, but in his last poems, the Eclogues, I think he touched on something that moves in a direction you could almost call Rimbaudian.

What made you decide to become a poet?
I don't know when I decided to become a poet, or a photographer. I used to look at *Life* magazine when I was growing up, and the photographers like Philippe Halsman, who worked for *Life*, did wonderful things that really interested me. I wasn't thinking about the art of photography at the time, it's just that the series of pictures he took of people jumping in the air, like the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Richard Nixon and Audrey Hepburn, were fascinating to me. I always loved reading but I didn't understand poetry right off the bat. It appealed to me a lot, but I really thought of myself being a writer of fiction because I loved to read and tell stories.

Hearing deaf parents also put me in a role of having to communicate for my father and mother. And I learned that deaf people project themselves through sign language into the thing they are describing. So if they're describing an animal in sign language, they take on the visual quality of whatever animal it is. I found that was something which came easily to me, and that I could also be a very good actor.

What did your parents think of your poetry?
My father wasn't really thinking about me being a poet, but my mother saw that I was doing this thing and, of course, she loved everything I did. She had a very special feeling about my poetry. She didn't really understand it but she did feel proud. Writing poetry certainly wasn't a talent that she would have manifested.

THELONIOUS MONK QUARTET "MYSTERIOSO" FROM MOVIE MONKS' ORIGINAL RECORDINGS 1944-1948 (NAXOS JAZZ LEGENDS) 1946

[Listens closely] I don't know, I can't tell you. I mean, it's so familiar, it's like hearing a childhood memory of

an old hurdy-gurdy song or a carousel or something. So who is that? Is it George Shearing or someone of that vintage?

Think bebop.
I don't know, I remember the first piano players I heard were Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson and people like that. **It's Thelonious Monk playing an early version of "Mysterioso".**
Oh, it is Monk. I thought it might be early Monk but I had already fixated my mind on these other piano players who were among the first people I listened to. **How did you listen to them – did you see them live or hear them on record?**

To get a photograph and decide to buy records was a big event for me. My parents, being deaf, never listened to music, so it was being something really quite unique for myself. In the beginning I always had a certain problem with the idea of music, as if I wasn't allowed to have access to it. When I got a photograph the first thing I did was go to these record stores where they sold 78s and bought whatever was the Top Ten of the time. I was exploring, it didn't take me too long before I got attracted to jazz, and when I was 16 – underage – I started to go to Birdland. There I would hear Dizzy Gillespie and Slim Gaillard perform, and then I started buying jazz records. When I was a sophomore at Cornell University I became president of the jazz club. We brought Stan Kenton to the campus and released a red 10" album of his music.

That must be quite a rarity now.
Yeah. My roommate at that time, Ross Firestone, who wrote a book about Benny Goodman, still has a copy. I'm pretty good at keeping things, but that Kenton record ended up somewhere and I don't have it anymore.

Did you ever see Monk play?
I have a feeling I did but I don't recall. Maybe not. He meant a lot to me and I knew people who knew him very well. I wrote this long poem about him called "Homage To Monk", which is in my most recent book [Chaos & Glory].

CECIL TAYLOR "DOUBLE HOLY HOUSE" FROM DOUBLES HOLY HOUSE (IMP) 1968

Is that an American? It's close to being a dead kind of thing. [Piano comes in] Is that Cecil?

What do you think of his use of poetry and jazz?
I've never heard Cecil do too much of that. I'm not saying he's not a poet, it's just that I don't know him as a poet. I was not so aware of Cecil Taylor's music when I first began listening to jazz. Maybe he wasn't performing at the places I went to. Over the years, though, I've heard him play a number of times and bought records by him. In every way he is a superhero of the arts and a great storyteller. We met one time at the Living Theater at a New Year's Eve party and it turned out that we had both seen [Gaila] Ulanova dance in *Romeo And Juliet* when she made a rare appearance in New York. She was 5'1 and it was the last year she danced. It left an incredible impression on me, and Cecil said, "Oh yes, I was going there every day and how much I appreciated her entree!" [much chuckling]. So we had that thing in common.

BRION GYSIN "I AM – GYSHINE POEM" FROM REVUE CLOU 20-21 (ALSA MARSEILLE) 1960

[Instantly] Well, of course, this is my old friend, the one and only Brion Gysin.

How did you become friends with him?
When I was in Paris I went to George Whitman's famous bookstore Shakespeare & Company and Brion was actually sitting in there for George, who had gone out to do something. He was there for about half an hour and we started having a conversation, and one thing led to another. We both had Morocco in common

and a great love for the best grass in the world. After that, I visited him at the Beat Hotel. I had a splendid out of grass from Tanger and he was very happy to share that with me. He showed me the Dreamachine and I looked through the portals at his face on the other side. It was illustrated inside with his drawings, and as the Dreamachine rotated they turned into incredible cartoons. And looking at his face I saw him pass through every archetype that he could possibly have contained, from Granny Gysin to gayest Gysin the Roman proconsul.

I'm a character in [Gysin's novel] *The Process*, he calls me Lenny Lavigne or something. But he did say one thing there that I will always cherish. He said I was as handsome as a Hindu god – well, I was 27 or something at that time.

WILLIAM BURROUGHS "VALENTINE DAY READING"

FROM REVUE CQ 45-41 (JULIA MARQHINE 1985)

[Instantly] Well, I don't have to talk too long about that. [Listens to more of the track] It was recorded on Valentine's Day in 1955 My God, it seems so long ago. The last millennium, huh? I like the sound effects on this.

You do?
Yeah, because they're fun. Someone gets shot, a car races off, it's somehow amusing to me. Burroughs was satirical, so you could play *The Star Spangled Banner* behind something he was reading and that would sound good. For the first record I made [The Major Traveler], the music I used is really great music because I required that.

You also published Burroughs and Gysin in your magazine *Genou*.
I was the first one to publish Brn's seminal piece [on Jaojoula] "The Pipes of Pan", and pieces of Burroughs's novel *Nova Express*, which he was writing at the time. I knew them both in Tanger as well as Paris.

What are your thoughts about Burroughs being associated with the Beat movement?
Burroughs is totally separate from the whole Beat thing, except that he was the professor or mascot for them and a guiding light because they respected him, and [Allen] Ginsberg was his lover. He actually started writing because he knew Kerouac and he tried to write a story called something like "And The Hippos Were Bored In Their Tanks", which was a collaboration with Kerouac. Nobody has ever printed it that I know of, you can't really read it unless you got to it in a library. I mean, how bad could it be? Burroughs, Gysin and Kerouac, all those guys are T-shirt material now. But **you never wear T-shirt material, were you?**
Well, I'm on a T-shirt. At least my name is. I could be T-shirt material now that I'm 70 because there's nobody really left. The ones that are left are not necessarily as active as I am. Also, I see in myself certain qualities that I know none of them had or could touch. Burroughs wasn't a poet and neither was Gysin. They weren't beatniks either, but they got pulled under that umbrella because of their association with Allen Ginsberg. I got called a Beat because I have a beard and I'm sometimes hard to get along with, but I don't pass in anybody's shoes...

ANGUS MACLISE "UNIVERSAL MUTANT #3"

FROM THE FIRST PART OF A SERIAL EPIC/NOV (THE WIRE) 1989

[Instantly] Is that Angus? Where's that come from? I mean, that *Quakebasket* donated to a *Wire* compilation in 2000.

I helped [Quakebasket's Tim Barnes] get a lot of the music he has on his label and now he's becoming such a hero, I can't believe it. Tim is a great guy who started with Angus and, through that, got to meet people like La Monte Young, Tony Conrad and

Christopher Yee, which broadened his knowledge a lot. I think it's great that I met Tim through Angus and it's amazing how many people, like him, feel personally about Angus's poetry. I feel that way as well and I would like to live long enough, and find the right moment, to devote enough time as I could in getting Angus's writing out in book form.

What qualities did Angus have that made him special to you?

I thought his music was great, he was a great drummer. As a musician he was more than that. He did conceptual things that were brilliant, everything from recording the winds of Gurospur in Nepal to shortwave broadcasts. Everything was music to him and I never heard anybody play better than him. He'd beat away at his suitcase on the road to Kathmandu, or somewhere else on route, until his hands were bloody. Angus would switch from focusing fully on his music and then back to his writing. He could never decide. He didn't like to be photographed, but one night I took this great portrait of him called *The Mefistophe Cardinal*, which is one of my all time favorite photographs. I used infra-red and regular color film and we changed the costumes a few times during that one night session.

When did you meet him?

We met somewhere in Paris while I was looking for [poet and publisher] Piero Heliczer's house. I bumped into Angus in the street and near there was a plaque on the wall that said "Dante lived here".

When I came back to New York after a long stay in Morocco I went to hear Angus do a Dreamsempire presentation, which included John Cale on viola, who looked like Prince Valiant in those days. I had with me a tape of the *Jalels* music, which was recorded by Brn Gysin and Paul Brauer, and eventually released on my own Trance label. I played it that evening for Angus and the other musicians and immediately we had this connection.

We had lovely connections in India, and finally in Kathmandu where we spent a lot of time together. Angus is the closest thing to being a brother poet of anybody I've met on the path. Anyone who ever met or knew Angus was touched by him as a person and how he incorporated himself into everything.

The track playing is called "Universal Mutant" – weren't you involved in something called the Universal Mutant Company?

As an underground film maker I started a group called the Universal Mutant Repertory Company, because that was where I was at. I even found some strange armor in a costume shop that I used. It was like a golden undergarment Christmas tree that was rather beautiful to look at. I got a whole bunch of them and gave them to people who agreed to be photographed. I still have a jacket where I had sewn one on the back. When Angus died in Kathmandu you famously took a picture of his funeral pyre. What prompted you to take that photograph?

I have a lot of special photographs, but that picture is so extraordinary. It was extraordinary enough as a moment, and the reality that Angus was being burned on a pyre and then his skull cracked open. I was coming down off a long usage of opium and felt quite sick. Breathing in all of those fumes was almost killing me. I was very close to the fire and I saw the skull crack open and the pink fluorescent coils of that magnificent brain – up all night on speed, talking about Chinese jaguar cults and special initiation mysteries – were suddenly exposed.

I was amazed to see that and then I wanted to take a photograph of it. I have a tendency to come in close and not take the photograph with the long view. I was trying to get closer to get a shot of the brain while it was cooking in the skull cap, before it turned into some indescribable nothingness that floated away on the air. I couldn't get that close to the fire, so I took a

couple of steps back and then at a certain point I stopped and took the photograph. Then when I got the contact sheet back I saw that the whole image looked like an incredible head. The log underneath was his jaw, the straw on top was his hair, the skull was in the place of the eye and it was indisputably Angus in a certain way. Not as he actually looked, but somehow suggesting in a transformative way where he could be at that moment. It's just an amazing picture. It's magic.

JACK SMITH "JACK SMITH READS 'LES EG'S DAMNEES'"

FROM THE NEW YORK GYMNASIUM – 36 JUDITH STREET 1962-1964 VOLUME 1 (TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS) 1964

[Listens for several seconds] It's Jack Smith. I knew Jack very well, is that Angus and Tony Conrad playing on this as well?

You're spot on.
They sound so lyrical and beautiful there with the music they're playing for Jack. They tended not to play like that usually. Angus has much more of a beat.

Can you give me a memory of Jack Smith?

Listening to that is almost bringing tears to my eyes, because I loved Jack a lot. He was stunningly funny in a lot of his work and so over the top, but on this he sounds more romantic.

You appeared in one of his films, didn't you?

Well, I held an elephant tank until I thought my arms would fall off, even though there was no film in the camera. I loved his films and his whole character, he was the most orchardous genius that I ever met. Jack was a very interesting over the top writer. He couldn't write what we call poems, but when he did write things they were very poetic and far out. He'd say he could write like Poe and anyone who knew him was affected by his language, his conversation and his humor, which was top drawer. Every time he did something he would find a completely new way of doing it.

Once I went over to his place very late at night just before I left the States to go to India. We had had a big argument before while talking to each other, but somehow I wanted to see him before I left. Because I cared enough and I had things I was giving up that I thought he might like to have – like an orange sequenced evening gown and a big hat with flaming orange sequins. I came there with Petra [Vogt] and the painter and theatre designer Robert Lavigne, who was afraid to go there because he thought Jack might beat him up. I said, "I'll protect you." He was very nice when he saw us downstairs. He said, "Ah, come on up," and threw out the key for us. We went up and spent this pleasant time together. It wasn't argument and touching and there was none of the argument or malice that had existed between us earlier. Suddenly he wanted to prepare some food for us – and then he put together a dish of fried ooplopp and grapefruit. Can you imagine that? I saw him there while he was making it and he was mumbling under his breath, "This'll get 'em" [laughs]. Orchidaceous is exactly what I mean [he has an orchid, a unique genius in a category of his own].

TUCKER MARTINE "CALL TO PRAYER (TANGIER)"

FROM THE GAZAM MEGACON RECORDING

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It sounds like India to me, Tanger? Is that the Jalels record? It's something in that vein. Is It Eat The Dream?

That's correct. I just wanted to play it to try and take you back to the period you spent in Kathmandu.
I feel so at home with that music, it sounds like what I heard in the cradle. I try to get as much of this as I can when I see it, but now there's so much of it out there that you can't keep up with it at all any more. **What were you doing out there?**



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I initially settled in Tangier, hopping from one hotel room to another. One would be only 30 cents a day and you'd have to get a basin and put it in a wooden frame to get water in the room. One of the first people I met there was George Andrews, who had a house in the Medina. He was a poet and he did the first *Book Of Grass* [An Anthology Of Indian Hemp] before a lot of other books came out on cannabis, which I was encouraging him to do. His friend was doing it together with Simon Vinkovskij, who's another old friend. So little by little I started getting into the life there and I loved it. It was a bit tricky to figure out how to do it at first, but I loved it and the whole atmosphere of it was just terrific and made for me, really. Bron [Gysin] was not there at that moment but I did meet certain people from his contingent – and when I went to Marrakech I finally met Paul Bowles.

You published a book with him for your *Silpstream Poetry Series*.

Eventually when I was living in Kathmandu and publishing a series of fine paper books, I wrote to him and he sent me "Next To Nothing", which was a long poem that he wrote after Jane Bowles died. Years afterwards when I was talking to him in Tangier one day I said, "What was your main impulse in writing that poem?" And he said, "I wrote it because you asked me." I suddenly realised that if I hadn't asked him for a manuscript to publish he might not have written it.

You also published a play by Beat poet Gregory Corso.

That was [1974's] *Way Out*, which Gregory called 'a dischor'd'. It never got published in any book, they always left it out. When he was 23 he was in Paris and he left that manuscript in Alan Zion's house, which was a popular meeting place for Americans and other expatriates. When I met Zion in Kathmandu, he saw that I was doing something with poetry. He said, "I want to give you this", and he gave me the manuscript which Gregory had left with him all those years ago. He just decided to give it to me when he got to Kathmandu – just like I once did in Neshapur with a bottle of mercury that Tony Conrad gave me.

What's the story behind that?

Tony found this bottle of mercury that someone had left in a doorway on 42nd Street. It was really huge and very heavy, but he carried it up to his loft. Then he filled up a small bottle for me out of that and I used some of it in the last scene of my film *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda*. I had this whole bottle filled with mercury and I took it with me on my trip when I left New York. I couldn't leave it behind. I got to Neshapur [in Iran] where I saw the tomb of the poet Omar Khayyam, which looked a little futuristic, and also the tomb of Fard U'd-din Attar, another great [12th century] poet, the author of *The Conference Of The Birds*. It was during Ramadan, and when I walked inside I was by myself, there was nobody else in there. I came to the sarcophagus of Fard U'd-din Attar and I brazenly lay down on my back on top of it. I'm not trying to claim a great mystical thing transpired, but I felt something of his spirit. I was lying on top of his sarcophagus, which was covered with letters, probably from his poems or about his life, in beautifully carved Persian scimitar-like script. When I got up I took that bottle of mercury I had carried with me from New York and poured it out all over the lid of the sarcophagus, and it ran shimmeringly into all of those letters. Then I left and I like to think that someone walked in afterwards and saw that liquid mercury shimmering all over the top of Attar's tomb. Would they think that it was the distillation of Attar's bones, or did they think that a guy from New York was crazy enough to pour it out as some kind of a positive and reverential gesture? □

For more information on Ira Cohen's work, go to www.theIraCohenAkashicProject.org and www.bjstbridge.org





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FLAMBOYANT NEW YORK SINGER ANTONY AND HIS GROUP THE JOHNSONS HAVE TRANSCENDED THEIR VAUDEVILLE ORIGINS TO EMERGE AS PURVEYORS OF THEATRICAL, ANDROGYNOUS BALLADRY THAT'S CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF EVERYONE FROM LOU REED TO BOY GEORGE. MARC MASTERS MEETS THE MAN WITH A "PERMEABLE STYLISTIC MEMBRANE"

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"The 90s was a lonely time for artists," insists Antony Hegarty, singer, pianist and leader of the revolving group known as The Johnsons, speaking via mobile phone before a show at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. "Especially in New York, so much work was created in solitude, work that you never thought would move beyond its tiny locale. All these amazing new kids—Devendra Banhart, Animal Collective, Joanna Newsom—I'm just so glad they're here. We got through a drought and suddenly everyone hiding in the woodwork has come out to greet us."

Antony's alignment with the 'new folk' movement might surprise anyone familiar with his work. His roots lie in New York's performance art scene, and his latest album with The Johnsons, *I Am A Bird Now*, features dramatic melodies and intricate piano-driven arrangements, a contrast to the sparse, rustic sound of Banhart and Newsom. His music most recalls the theatrical, androgynous balladry of the 1970s, as practised by David Bowie, Roy Music and Lou Reed circa *Transformer* and *Berlin*. Tracks like the moaning melodrama "My Lady's Story" and the aching hymn "Man Is The Baby" are epic, gender-bending torch songs, replete with bombastic piano, mournful strings and cinematic crescendos. They also showcase a quality Antony shares with Banhart and Newsom: an inimitable voice. His gripping, octave-climbing wail is brazenly soulful and unabashedly emotional. "I have report cards from second grade saying 'Antony loves music,' but unfortunately he can't hit any of the notes," he says, laughing. "My singing is constantly shifting and malleable. I don't want to be this fortress of a single style. I think of it in terms of permeable versus impermeable membranes. I have a very permeable stylistic membrane."

Generate this mobility. *I Am A Bird Now* is impressively unified, especially considering that 20 different musicians contribute, including Banhart, Reed and Antony's boyhood idol Boy George. "I wanted to create something where when you get to the end, you're at the beginning again, so it feels like a circle," explains Antony. "Our first record [2000's *Antony And The Johnsons*] was so theatrical and I've been moving toward something more intimate. This record is much more internal and I wanted it to sound that way, with everything very close." Antony's collaborators do make their presence felt. On "You Are My Sister," a gospel-tinged paean to familial love, Boy George's singing is boldly moving. "Having him sing with me was a revelation," beams Antony. "Given my relationship with him as a kid in my mind, it was quite emotional. He sang his heart out, and I'll always be grateful to him for that." Lou Reed adds a spoken opening to "Faithful Of Love," whose horn-inflected R&B swing evokes the soulful prayers of Otis Redding, another hero of Antony's. "Lou and I share a love for those Shangri-La-type songs with little spoken intros," Antony admits. "His presence created so much more context. It fills the song with this chainaw edge of possibilities that might not have been there before he stepped into the room."

Antony and Reed first collaborated when Reed invited the singer to interpret his *Transformer* classic "Perfect Day" for his 2002 album *The Raven*. Joining Reed's subsequent tour, Antony often sang another Reed staple, "Candy Says," as an encore (a version is included on the live 2004 Reed album *Animal Serenade*). "It was a very emotional experience," gushes Antony. "There were nights where I felt like I was being cradled up to heaven, singing about Candy Darling and evoking that whole world." Darling, a transvestite and Warhol 'superstar', was a fixture in the downtown art world of the 1960s, tales of which inspired Antony to infiltrate New York's performance scene decades later. Darling also plays a role in *I Am A Bird Now*, pictured on her deathbed on the album's cover shot, taken in 1974 by artist Peter Hujar. "I was looking at Devendra's record cover for *Rejoice In The Hands*, realising I'd forgotten that record covers are an opportunity to put the greatest art forward. It doesn't have to be some ridiculous picture of me, it can be something much more significant," asserts Antony. "For the Lake EP [Hujar's estate] gave me a close-up of the same series. You can see that it says Cabini Hospital on the sheets of the bed. As a New Yorker, I've visited so many friends in that hospital. My friend Paige died there and she was like the Candy Darling of my generation. There's a lot of energy around the idea of Candy Darling. For me and the world I come from she's an icon."

Antony has lived in New York since he moved from California in 1990 at the age of 19, intent on joining the cabaret world he had seen depicted in the 1988 documentary *Mondo New York*. "I went to finish school, but really it was just to be there," he recounts. "I needed to get to the city before I hit 20. I felt like it was the last stop, really." He began performing with the avant garde ensemble Blacklips at the Pyramid Club, staging surrealist dramas, wearing extravagant costumes (he has called the group's aesthetic "blood, bags and gore"), and singing over his own prerecorded music, all in front of mostly drunken afterhours audiences. "I went through this sort of cupcake period, where I had designers making me outfits. It was more costume based," recalls Antony, whose shows are now more music-oriented but still exude theatricality. "It's all become more integrated. There's less separation between the different aspects and I'm glad for that."

As he worked with more musicians, Antony dubbed his rotating group The Johnsons in homage to Marsha P Johnson, the legendary drag queen and gay rights activist. "The Johnsons started out like a performance project," he says. "It was an extension of what I did at the Pyramid, which was mostly performance, and occasionally there'd be a song. We recorded our first record in 1998. And then William Basinski invited me to play at the Kitchen and it was the first concert I'd ever done with a full band. Johnsons became a loose term that encompasses all the people that I work with." Those initial recordings

impressed Current 93's David Tibet, who released the group's debut on his Curto label. As The Johnsons established a residency at Joe's Pub that same year, Antony also pursued other performance outlets. In the film *Animal Factory*, directed by New York theatre veteran and indie film mainstay Steve Buscemi, he sang to a prison cafeteria filled with actual inmates. Later, he collaborated with film maker Charles Atlas for a Whitney Biennial project entitled *TURNING*, with The Johnsons playing in front of Atlas's live video projections of rotating female models. "It's my favourite thing that I've ever done," he declares. "When I saw those pictures of beautiful girls turning, it was the first time I saw something that I could look at forever."

Antony And The Johnsons also spent nearly three years working on *I Am A Bird Now*. "We've got so many recording sessions that went into finally choosing a few songs," he sighs. "It was pored over with a fine tooth comb." The process was so overwhelming that Antony nearly gave up, until Banhart intervened. "He picked me up at the end of 2003. I was at my wit's end, about to abandon the project," Antony admits. "And this kid that's ten years younger than me took me by the scruff of the neck and said, 'I love what you're doing, come and do a guest spot at my concert.' He welcomed me into that group. I just felt so inspired by what I was seeing in his work."

"I've realised that my creative process is accumulative," he continues. "I slowly assess components, and then put them in relationship to each other. That's how this record was put together. It was very accumulative. It might be a little scrap of words and then some music, or it might come all at once. I love arranging things. Different concepts create different kinds of meanings." The end result on *I Am A Bird Now* is strikingly simple and direct. Antony takes straight-at-the-heart shots at themes like family, death and especially gender, a subject the singer's androgynous appearance and vocal range have often blurred. "For Today I Am A Boy", for example, bolls Antony's own identity conflicts down to their core: "One day I'll grow up/And be a beautiful woman/One day I'll grow up/And be a beautiful girl/But for today I am a child/For today I am a boy." "People say the album's very direct, but I think a lot of it is very heavily veiled," he laughs. "For Today I Am A Boy" is direct. It's a very plain. When I wrote it, I felt shame about putting it out there. But it became an exciting challenge for me to push through that and see if there was any value to the message. And it ended up being very rewarding."

"I'm interested in how far material that's generated from a very specific local community and set of imagery can move beyond that and be appreciated for different reasons," he concludes. "I don't think it's a prerequisite that people get all this stuff to get what's going on emotionally. It's wonderful that people are finding their own way through my stuff, finding it useful or meaningful." □ *I Am A Bird Now* is out now on Rough Trade (UK) and Secretly Canadian (US)



THE NUMBERS RACKET

TRANSLATING THE MATHEMATICAL FORMULAE AND MAGICAL RATIOS GOVERNING
NATURAL FORMS INTO COMPOSITIONAL TOOLS, ELLIOTT SHARP'S CYBERPUNK TAKE ON
AVANT ROCK, IMPROV AND 21ST CENTURY BLUES DRAWS ON SCIENCE FICTION TO
ROAD-TEST HIS VISIONS OF A TURBULENT WORLD,
WORDS: PHIL ENGLAND, PHOTOGRAPHY: ANNA SCHORI



"People think there's one musical representation that's the entire mapping of someone's personality or thoughts," states Elliott Sharp, "and it's not like that. You can think in a lot of different modes. It's like using different languages. If I were a novelist I wouldn't want to restrict myself to the letters between P and V. I like to use a lot of vocabulary. I have a personal syntax for it and I like to find different ways of orchestrating it."

The diverse range of manifestations of Sharp's music is impressive. He is a blues guitarist of great invention and power as well as a composer, improviser and saxophonist. He has written for string quartet, composed process-based pieces for instrumental rock group, invented and modified instruments, and worked in the arena of electroacoustic composition. On occasion this remarkable genre-hopping capacity has been mistaken for the mark of the dilettante, the flirtatious amateur.

However a batch of recent releases lays this shallow charge to rest. Though wildly different in terms of style and instrumentation, they reveal that Sharp has strong and mature statements to make in many arenas. *Rude Hybrid: Yahoo* — a collaboration with subversive wordsmiths — critiques contemporary US politics with a populist yet uniquely mercurial pop-rock sensibility; the orchestral *Calling*, commissioned by German radio, is a compelling, fully notated composition; *Velocity Of Hue*, his first album of improvisations on modified acoustic guitar, has received universal praise; and a recording of his most recent process composition, *Radicalism*, for an ensemble of wind and brass, shows the mature flowering of long-term compositional interests.

Sharp's status as an outsider is the self-imposed result of his staunch independence and refusal to compromise. For Sharp this is not a bad place to be; rather it is the place where new forms are road tested and hybrids emerge. "I always live being on the edge of things," he declares, "because at that point where you're interfacing between two different zones which are relatively stable, you get a kind of unsettled state, a chaotic state. New stabilities and new predictabilities will eventually form but there's a moment at which it's very exciting."

Sharp's ability to draw on diverse influences while creating bridges between scenes is evidence of his networking skills and a courteous sociability that has gone some way towards reuniting the traditional relationships inside the New York counter culture.

Within two years of arriving in New York City in 1979, he was working with the likes of Bill Laswell, Olaf Dora, Charles K. Noyes, Philip Wilson, Mark Miller, Bobby Previte and David Linson in versions of his rock group 1/5/M. For six months he held a regular club at a "dark and claustrophobic dump" called A7 on Tuesday nights where dozens of musicians passed through an open membership version of 1/5/M. "I was trying to bring these scenes into one space at the same time," he recalls. "I brought in improvisers, I had [British percussionist] Paul Burwell on one of those gigs and [People Band drummer] Terry Day. I wanted the gigs to be 'free noise Afro-Tibetan rock improvisation with a groove'."

"When I came to New York I found great things about all of these scenes, but also things I didn't like," he continues. "The improv scene around John Zorn seemed very much based on the early [Derek Bailey]

Company model. It was very didactic with very strict rules about what you could and couldn't do, and they completely ignored rhythm. And then there was the scene around Glenn Branca and Rhys Chatham, which was a little too minimalist, a little too monomaniacal, even though I liked the fact that Glenn thought a lot about acoustics. The acoustic bass for whether things go together well or not was important to me and something that I'd always been interested in from my work in math and science."

Carbon — the rock group that evolved out of 1/5/M — "was much angrier, much more wired". Even so, it lasted 12 years, albeit with a changing line-up. Their first gig is excerpted on the Homestead album that documented the five-day Speed Trials festival in May 1983, where the track "TYNNMYD" sits snugly alongside The Fall, Swans, Live Skull, Sonic Youth, Lydia Lunch and Arto Lindsay's Top Killers. "A lot of the other stuff from that early session was pure noise," says Sharp, "as were a lot of things that were going on with the bands at that time."

Sharp's musical studies started early. He played classical piano from the time he was six. His mother had survived the Holocaust by hiding in France and her father had survived a concentration camp. As a consequence, perhaps, his parents had high expectations and pushed young Elliott hard. "I was expected at seven years old to be a Nobel prize winning scientist and a classical concert pianist and whatever else," he sighs. "I was convinced that the piano gave me asthma. I nearly died when I was seven years old or so, I was in hospital for ten days. When I recovered I switched to clarinet — everyone seemed to think that it would be good for my lungs to play a wind instrument."

At 17 Sharp was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to study science at Carnegie Mellon University. "I'd been doing some research of my own musing fruit flies with microscopes. So, I went off to Pittsburgh but I was much more interested in music. I'd gotten an electric guitar before I left. I spent most of my time in the lab designing fuzzboxes and playing with a seven-head tape recorder. I got a DJ slot in the university's station from midnight to 4am and they had a great collection of weird stuff. I also picked up all those ESP records for 99 cents each in Pittsburgh. I found Harry Partch's music and his book [Genesis Of A Music], also Xenakis's book *Formalized Music* and his electroacoustic record on Nonesuch, which was very important to me. Plus all the psychedelic music and Country blues and Indian music that was floating around. It was really a great time to have open ears."

In 1969 Sharp went to Cornell University to study anthropology "because it seemed about the one major where I could just about do anything. The department had good access to hallucinogenics too — a lot of people doing fieldwork in exotic places. The revolution was coming down, our campus was occupied by the National Guard. I managed to get arrested at least one time there and another time in Buffalo. All these things contributed to more distancing from academia and just delving into music."

In 1972 Sharp switched direction and went to Bard College, partially, he says, "because [free jazz trombonist] Roswell Rudd was teaching there. I was very interested in his playing and his arrangements, especially the work with Archie Shepp." Sharp took up

the alto saxophone as well as studying electronic music, jazz, aesthetics, information theory and ethnic musics. His formal studies continued with a Bachelor of Arts at the State University of New York in Buffalo with tutors Morton Feldman, Lejaren Hiller and Charles Keil, though they were interrupted for a year after he was arrested during a student demonstration and charged with stabbing in the head of campus security. He ended up spending 12 months fighting a potential 35 year sentence. Eventually the charges were dropped on the proviso that he did not sue the city for false arrest and police brutality.

One of Sharp's principal and ongoing compositional interests has been in process-based works, which deploy small cells of musical information as core materials for improvisation, or for recombination and mutation by the players. He refers to these compositions as his "algorithmic" works and he makes them freely available for download on his Website to encourage people to play and study them.

Another key compositional concern has been the use of Fibonacci numbers [a number sequence derived by adding two numbers together to get the next in the sequence] to determine both tuning ratios and the internal structures of works such as Marco Polo's *Argon* and Self-Squared Dragon. The average ratio between successive numbers in the series is known as the proportion known as the Golden Section, which is found in ancient architecture as well as occurring in spiral-related forms in nature.

Sharp came across this idea in the mid-80s when, out of frustration, he was on the verge of moving out of New York — he even considered an invitation from a Bolivian musician to move to his country. Then one night he had an epiphany. "I'd eaten some mushrooms and I'd been reading a lot of mathematics books again, just because it seemed hermetic and appropriate to my state of mind," he recalls. "I'd always been obsessed with Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Section as a way of looking at natural forms and processes — which is what mathematics always has been for me. It's not a formula for doing things but it's an abstraction, a way of making a generalised metaphor for things that occur naturally."

"So with these mushrooms in my system I decided to make tunings from Fibonacci numbers and saw the correspondences with ratios from the Just Intonation tuning system. I tuned my guitar up, sat down in front of my amplifier with a blanket over my head so I wouldn't disturb people too much. And I just played and played and played. I felt that there was something to be explored so I wrote a bunch of compositions over the next few weeks. That became that first Carbon album."

Carbon pursued other avenues in the first half of the 90s as a kind of cyberpunk take on rock with a line-up that included Marc Sloan on electric and prepared bass, Joseph Trump or David Linson on drums, Zeena Parkins on electric harp and keyboards, and David Weinstein on sampler. The group continued to push boundaries, operating in a grey zone where they combined rock complexity, improvised detail, electronic morphing and a thrillingly paranoid urban energy.

Around the same time Carbon were winding down, Sharp started up Terraplane to explore his renewed



One offshoot of *Syndakt* is the remarkable orchestral work *Calving*, which was commissioned by the German radio station Hessischer Rundfunk. It's a 30 minute piece with a protracted, dramatic end, which Sharp says he first conceived as one example of a frozen version of *Syndakt*. "It was as if I had been running a computer simulation of it in my inner ear," he continues. "I began to notice it during a residency in Umbria in Italy in 2000 where I was surrounded by natural beauty. This initial version – about 12 minutes' worth – and its backup were both lost in two unrelated hard drive crashes within one week. I put the work aside until the attacks of 9/11. As I sat there, something at what our 'leaders' had conspired to create, I found that my only reasonable outlet to keep from blowing up was to drive back into what I had been hearing in Italy and to regenerate it – although filtered by a new and less utopian outlook."

Sharp says he doesn't want to "get started" on politics but concedes, "I obsess about it and rant about it daily." Yet politics has always coursed – more or less obliquely – through the veins of his music, whether it be in titles like "The Free World" and "Since The Coup," his *State Of The Union* compositions of minute-long miniatures by various North American outsider musicians, or in the social commentary of his *Yahoos* trilogy of collaborations.

In the sleeve note for his 1992 composition *Infidels*, which he describes as "a series of snapshots, moods and reflections on the uprisings" (released on the 1995 *Thick* album *Xenocodex*), Sharp states squarely, "Judaism, whether religious, cultural or historical, does not equal Zionism. As one whose family survived the Holocaust, I was made aware of 'our' place in the world and developed a sense of how fascist nationalism is one of this world's great evils. To see it practiced by the Jews of Israel [in a self-defeating escalation of violence] pains me deeply."

"When I gave my introduction at the first festival of Radical Jewish Music at the Knitting Factory people booed," Sharp tells me. "When I said, 'Judaism is not necessarily Zionism', one guy yelled out, 'What is it then? A bowl of fruit?' I know my history pretty well and I have very real criticisms. I see Zionism as a 19th century political movement that arose out of dire needs but took a self-serving and hypocritical turn. It's an emotional issue and you can't discuss these things logically. But I'm glad that John [Zorn] put the piece out because he and I are 180 degrees out of phase about Zionism. I'd recommend everyone read one *Palestine Complete* by Israeli historian Tom Segev. He explores the present-day problems and their sources in the post-Ottoman British occupation."

Over the years Sharp has collaborated with a number of Arabic musicians as a natural extension of his passion for non-Western music. He has recorded and performed with Master Musicians Of Joujouka leader Bachir Attar, as well as Bedouin six string zither (*sumsumiya*) players Enad Abu-Kaf and Mohammed Sinc from the Negev desert. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Lincoln Center asked Sharp to put a big band together for their focus on Arabic music. The resulting *Al Mashreq* All-Stars included Attar, Bedouin musicians Muhammad Abu-Ajaj on oud, MUSA Al Hajaj vocals and Sultan Abu Takris *sumsumiya*, singer Natacha Atlas, drummers Hamid

Drake and Michael Zerang, Graham Haynes on cornet and flugelhorn, OJ Mutamassak, Palestinian multi-instrumentalist Zafer Sawil, and Palestinian oud player and vocalist Marwan Abado.


"It was a great collaboration," enthuses Sharp. "We basically had two days to put together an orchestral concert. I had pieces from each of them, which I arranged for the ensemble, and so each different sub-group would be featured as a soloist and then we had interludes in between that the whole group would play. We got a huge response – a standing ovation."

One of Sharp's many forthcoming projects is an opera he is working on with science fiction writer Jack Womack. "I love his writing and he's a buddy," says Sharp. Both *Terraplane* and Womack's second novel – part of a New York trilogy that depicts a paranoid vision of the near future in the tradition of William S. Burroughs – take their name from the classic Robert Johnson song and Womack also appears reading his own text on *Radio Hyper-Yahoo*, Sharp's most recent release.

The opera is based on the real-life murder of the night manager at the cafe Binbon on Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1961. The killer was Jack Henry Abbott, the incarcerated author of *In The Belly Of The Beast*, whom Norman Mailer had successfully campaigned to release. Sharp was a regular at the Binbon and often saw Abbott in the area. In fact he had retired to the venue after playing a jazz gig on the night of the murder.

"I saw Abbott come in and sit down with a couple of people and we left," remembers Sharp. "About half an hour later apparently he'd stabbed the night manager over us of the toilet. I mean, there was no toilet at the Binbon. It always seemed like the perfect topic for an opera, since you have to have someone getting killed – preferably stabbed – in an opera. But really it's about the change in the neighbourhood that happened. It was at a cusp point when the neighbourhood began uprooting, before crack had hit – it had been a heroin neighbourhood before that. So the yuppies were coming in, the art galleries were blooming, the whole East Village arts scene. Jack [Womack] was also living down there at that time so he felt very comfortable writing about it."

Womack is not the only science fiction writer Sharp admires. He dedicated an early computer piece to Philip K Dick (*PKD on LoopHole* – just reissued on Arc 3: *Cyberpunk & The Virtual Science on Atavistic*) and on his most recent visit to London he recorded author Russell Hoban reading from his book *Riddley Walker*, which has since been turned into a short radio play for WPS1 (www.wps1.org), the Internet radio project for which he is the contemporary music curator.

As one of the great loves of Sharp's life, it's easy to see how science fiction has infused his work with a futuristic bent. He sees a parallel between his music and the once divided literary realm. "The music I do bears the same relationship to real music as science fiction does to real science, or to real writing," he argues. "I like the idea that operating in a realm that isn't considered correct gives you a freedom to try different ideas. I can consider it speculative music in the same way that sci-fi is speculative fiction." 
Radio Hyper-Yahoo is out now on zöar. Website: www.elivotssharp.com

interest in the blues. "Well, I never went away from it really," he says. "Very often when I was at home at night I'd play a Country blues, or a Charlie Patton song or a Skip James song, because I love that music and have played it since I was a kid. Robert Johnson, you know, all of it. Friends would have a party and ask me to put a blues band together. I like playing that music. It's great to channel that feeling into your hands. And so I figured, why not? Steven Joerg – who was running Homestead at the time – was at some party where I was doing the *Terraplane* stuff and he said, 'Hey, do you want to make a record?' Sure, why not?"

Sharp says he defines blues as a "mode of expression" rather than a particular form or certain scales, and on an album like *Blues For Next* (2000) he interprets the genre liberally as a springboard for flights of Hendrix-like abandon, invention and reinvention. *Terraplane* recently signed a three-album deal with the German label Intuition – the first release under the deal is slated for autumn. In 2003 the group toured the UK under the auspices of the Contemporary Music network with Howlin' Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin as special guest. At the London gig, Sumlin would take the spotlight for a couple of numbers and then retire for the next half dozen.

"He's 73 or 74 and he had a mild heart attack and had to have one lung removed," Sharp reveals. "But it's going to take a lot more than that to put Hubert down. You know, he began drinking moonshine and smoking at age six," he chuckles. But the tour must have been hard on him. "We tried to make it not so, give him plenty of time to rest," says Sharp. "He would sleep a lot on the bus. You know, it's hard. He's been doing that all his life. Hubert is really happiest when he's on the road. He also likes hanging out at home with his hedge clippers."

Meanwhile Sharp has continued to explore his algorithmic ideas through his extended ensemble Orchestra Carbon and, increasingly, through a number of other self-named groups. Most recently he has refined these ideas in the compositions *Syndakt* and *Radicals*. "My musical obsessions now are much more concerned with biological manifestations," he explains. "Syndakt and *Radicals* are all about recombinant musical genetics, you could say. It's about trying to create musical processes, algorithmic structures that are living organisms in a way. Each time the piece is played it has a recognisable characteristic, but in every performance the manifestation is different. I like the idea of using a composition that is just a few lines of code – it's like very elegant computer programming. When I first heard about fractal geometry I was so excited, because it was what I was reaching for in terms of a way of analysing how I thought music could and should be. The [Benoit] Mandelbrot book, *The Fractal Geometry Of Nature*, came to me at a time just after I had had my fibroblast cancer epiphany and the connection between them was very, very direct. I got to do some gigs where Mandelbrot spoke about his work and got to know him a little bit."

Syndakt has been performed around 20 times including once by the Berlin New Music group Zeitkratzer, who famously transcribed Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* and have commissioned a number of Sharp pieces.



EIGHT ESSENTIAL SHARP CDS

CARBON **MONSTER CURVE** **ATONAL/SST 1992**

The earliest Carbon material culled from their first three albums originally released on Sharp's own xCeR label between 1984 and 1987. Song structures and instrument tunings are derived from the Fibonacci number series but Sharp also notes the use of "textural overtones series, urban and industrial sounds and textures... circular breathing, interlocked polyrhythms, cyclical and microtonal melodies and throat singing". Out there rock complexity at its freest, with pounding asymmetrical crowd-rhythms by drummers David Linton, Mark B. Miller, Charles K. Noyes and Bobby Previte. Hypnotically circular saxophones riff recall The Master Musicians Of Joujouka. Sharp's homemade panter, violinist, tubists and elab are featured alongside the traditional instrumentation.

CARBON **AMUSIA** **ATAVISTIC 1994**

Late period Carbon featuring Zanna Perkins (electric harp), Marc Shoen (electric and prepared basses), Joseph Trump (drums) and David Weinstein (sampler). Exploratory, futuristic takes on an expanded rock music.

TERRAPLANE **BLUES FOR NEXT** **KNITTING FACTORY 2000**

The second Terraplane album after a six year hiatus was a double. One disc features an instrumental set of new Sharp tunes, the other a series of collaborations with Howlin' Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin, and singer-songwriters Dean Bowman and Eric Mingus.

ORCHESTRA CARBON **RADIOLARIA** **ZQAR 2001**

Algorithmic work performed by a 13 piece ensemble - featuring nine wind players and a percussionist plus three members electronically processing the ensemble and playing samples of wind instruments - recorded live at Tonic in New York City. A suite of pulsing, asymmetrical blasts and shifting massed chords played with serenity and verve.

ELLIOTT SHARP & REINHOLD FRIEDL **ANOSTALGIA** **GROB 2002**

An improv meeting with the leader of Berlin New Music ensemble Zeislercast. The two instrumentalists explore textural interfaces and chilly atmospheres in a creative and varied sequence of abstract face-offs. Sharp plays electric guitar, computer and soprano saxophone while Friedl explores the virtues of a piano.

ENSEMBLE MODERN/RADIO-SINFONIE-ORCHESTER FRANKFURT **RACING HEARTS/TESSERATION ROW/CALLING** **HR-MEDIA 2003**

Ensemble Modern reveal Tesseration Row, Sharp's ha-rasing 1980 composition in just intonation for string quartet (it was originally written for The Soldier String Quartet in 1988), and the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt perform two more recent composed pieces for orchestra. Calling is an Edgard Varèse-like major work with the dramatic intensity of the 2001 result on the World Trade Centre, around which it was composed.

ELLIOTT SHARP **VELOCITY OF HUE** **EMANEM 2003**

Sharp's first album of acoustic solos on self-modified 'hypereal' acoustic guitar is something of an oddity for a label that has built its reputation as a stable of Brit Improv. Sharp added a Dobro bridge to enable tortoise-like note bending, and he adds a little E-bow every now and then for extra sustain. Its mix of Hare Ratchel-style guitar extensions, blues, Far Eastern influences and Sharp's furious interlocking hammer-on patterning nightly won warm praise.

ELLIOTT SHARP **RADIO HYPER-YAHOO** **ZQAR 2004**

Third in Sharp's 'top and social commentary' 'Moloss' series. This one comprises collaborations with writers and performers poets including actor Steve Buscemi (reading William S. Burroughs), Jack Womack, Eric Bogosian, Trade Morris, Edwin Torres, Maggie Estep, Lee Lowell and Easter Balet. Varied, assumed and with a biting series of humour. □





PHANTOM POWER

A BOLT OF LIGHTNING BALL OF ENERGY THAT IS MIKE PATTON SHOWS NO SIGNS OF LETTING UP, AS HE RANGES OVER AN EVER WIDER ARRAY OF HARDLINE MUSIC AND GROUPS INCLUDING FANTÔMAS, TOMAHAWK, MR BUNGLE AND HIS NEW COLLABORATIVE VENTURE PEEPING TOM. IN A SEARCHING INTERVIEW, THE MUSICIAN REVEALS THE SOURCE OF HIS RELENTLESS DRIVE, HIS THOUGHTS ON HIS FRIEND AND MENTOR JOHN ZORN, AND THE RATIONALE BEHIND HIS ECLECTIC IPECAC LABEL.

WORDS: PHIL FREEMAN. PHOTOS: ROBERT GALLAGHER

"I go up to **Victoriaville**, or any other jazz festival, any place where minds are supposed to be as open as they get, and we come out there with one loud guitar, one note and ears turn off. It's Heavy Metal." I exist – and my music exists – in a place where it can be snubbed equally by anyone. And God bless it for that." Mike Patton is accustomed to, even genial about, being misunderstood, shrugged off and disdained. As long as he's been in the public eye, he's expressed himself through an array of projects, never giving any hints as to which, if any, is the closest to his heart. In the mid-1990s, he toured arenas worldwide, singing for the funk metal group Faith No More. At the same time, his spin-off group Mr Bungle was passing off curious listenings with three wilfully obnoxious albums, each one a collision of genres fuelled by a savage need to shock and distress the unwary, and to make Patton and his buddies laugh. Eventually, Faith No More and Mr Bungle both disbanded or went on hiatus, but Patton didn't settle down – the opposite, in fact. He's spent the last half-dozen years hurling himself in so many directions it's difficult to believe he sleeps. He's amassed an arm-load list of credits, collaborating with everyone from John Zorn and Merzbow to Dan The Automator and The X-ecutioners. His vocals have seasoned diverse releases including Björk's *Medúlla*, and White People, the latest by Prince Paul's Handsome Boy Modeling School. He's also back to fronting two groups. One, Tomahawk, is the closest he's currently got to a mainstream rock project. His bandmates include ex-members of Helmet and The Jesus Lizard and the group has released two albums on Patton's label Ipecac. The other is Fantômas, an underground all-star quartet featuring members of Mr Bungle, The Melvins and Slayer. They've released four albums since 1998, each one an attempt to break the boundaries of Metal. Fantômas sculpt intense, ambitious music that demands focused listening even as it encourages demented moaning – a combination, a dichotomy, that encapsulates Patton's entire oeuvre.

Born in Arcadia, California ("Behind the redwood curtain," as he puts it) to a teacher and a social worker, Patton – who now resides in San Francisco – describes a restless childhood. "It's very easy to get lost, growing up in small towns like that," he says. "You develop a certain neurotic energy that sticks with you your whole life and you're always itching to get the hell out of wherever you are. I still have that, even though I'm happy in San Francisco. Maybe that's why I tour a lot, I'm not sure." It's probably got something to do with his leaps from project to project, too. Patton is a highly focused creature of the studio – or the bedroom. He's a pure autodidact, who taught himself the rudiments of multiple instruments, while learning all about production and orchestration from his massive record collection. Like Jim 'Foetus' Thirlwell, he takes time to figure out how to accomplish the sonic task he's labouring over at any given moment. He describes his studio style as "punch it in till you get it right. Nobody's looking." When an idea strikes him, he slaps together a demo tape, then goes hunting for musicians capable of realising it more expertly than he can.

This is also the method employed by Tom Waits, Frank Zappa and Brian Wilson – Californians all. Drawing lines between Patton and Zappa may seem obvious or even intellectually lazy. Mr Bungle's frenetic leaps from disco-funk to free jazz to Metal, often within the space of a single verse of one song, clearly mirrors similarly hypercaffeinated work by The Mothers Of Invention. But they don't have that much in common really – and, to be honest, Patton's discography might be shallower, but its breadth and

the relative absence of smugness make it the greater achievement. Both men – like Waits, Wilson and Harry Partch – are exemplars of California Pop Art (musical department). Patton's willingness to work in any style of music, especially ones he's unfamiliar with, is reminiscent of Zappa's paeodic takes on disco, punk and doo-wop; Waits's adaptation of beatnik and hobo personae; and Partch's transformation of hobo graffiti into modern classical music. This sort of wide-ranging cultural appropriation has long been a hallmark of Californian art, whether it be the gas station paintings of Ed Ruscha, the recontextualised Gumby drawings of Raymond Pettibon or the hot rod graphics gone psychedelic and hostile that make up the foundation of Robert Williams's vein-bursting canvases.

For the past 15 years, Patton has enjoyed a close and creative partnership with the decidedly non-Californian composer and performer John Zorn. He introduced himself to the saxophonist at a gig in 1990, offering a Mr Bungle demo tape and a request for Zorn to produce the group's first album. Since then, Patton has established himself among Zorn's vast array of collaborating musicians, appearing on many of his albums and releasing two discs of his own on Zorn's label Tzadik (1997's Futurism-inspired *Pranzo* Ottranzista and 1999's *Adult Themes For Voice*). The two men even have a continuing group together: the electronics/sax/vocals improv trio Hemophiliac with Ikuu Mori. Under that banner, they've released a limited edition two CD set and a live CD from one of Zorn's recent 50th birthday gigs at New York's Tonic. The Hemophiliac project has taught Patton an important lesson – that aggression is fine, but it's not necessarily a panacea. "Zorn and I felt it was really important, that – we have a great language, we play duos all the time but it's much deeper and more intense to have Ikuu there," he explains. "There really is a difference in approach from the female improvisors that I've played with and the males. And over time, Ikuu taught me that it isn't always about attack, attack, attack. What that meant to me in Faith No More... I don't think I knew it then. I was a teenager. I think by our second record, I had it figured out, that there's a world out there and there's a whole lot of other ways to approach what you do."

Faith No More had a minor hit with a cover of The Commodores' glutinous ballad "Easy", and many Patton listeners have marvelled at the affection for lounge exotica and other seemingly edgeless musical forms that's manifested itself on the *Lovage* album *Music To Make Love To Your Old Lady By* (with Dan The Automator), and *Romances*, an experimental album made with Norway's John Kaada. He's got an answer for them. "In a weird way, by listening to it, I'm studying it. How is this arranged? Especially with exotica stuff. The orchestration in that music is so dense and so complex and so amazing, if you can get beyond the kitsch. And I can do that in 30 seconds flat. With Les Baxter in particular, the orchestral density of what that guy accomplished never ceases to amaze me. I hear new stuff in there every time I listen."

Zorn, with whom Patton has gone on massive record-buying trips to Japan, has clearly been a crucial figure in his life – a good friend and musical mentor. "He was probably the first person that I'd improvised with," Patton explains, recalling early sax/vocal duos the two performed at the Knitting Factory and other venues. "No safety net. Naked on stage, where it all could and would and should have gone wrong. What you do is, you listen and interact and hopefully develop a language. One of the many things he taught me was that it can happen. And it can happen with a total stranger. It can happen with someone who's 30





years older than you, or with a small child, but developing that telepathy is special when it does happen." Working with Zorn, whose command of the saxophone is pretty much absolute, seems to have inspired Patton to develop his vocal range and technique. Though he's self-taught in this as in other things, the need to keep up with a penitential and lightning-fast duo partner has forced Patton to create a palette of guttural sounds, shrieks and gibberies that The Boredoms' Ery might well envy. And the partnership is a two-way street. Zorn is clearly enthused by the singer's boundless energy and aggression. Naked City's most punishing run, the ultra-heavy single track "Love T.C.H.", features thank you's to Patton and The Melvins, presumably for inspiration, in the booklet.

Patton recently lent his unique vocalizations to a reworking of Naked City's track "Grand Guignol", which has just appeared in the group's Complete Studio Recordings box set. "He said he always intended it to be a piece with a vocal. Actually, with lots of vocals. He described it as a concerto for voice," Patton recalls. "And I think originally he wanted Diamanda (Gallas) to do it, and something happened and she didn't do it, but he said, 'Hey, this is the way I always intended it and I want you to do it.' He did give me a little bit of direction, but for the most part he said, do whatever the hell you want." Surprisingly, Patton's first version was too nuanced and subtle for Zorn. "Usually, when I'd worked with him and with Naked City, it was about space and context. You couldn't put vocals in every section, that's the least dynamic thing you could do. So knowing the way he works, and how from past experience he'd put vocals in every other section, and I'd lay out for a while, whatever, the way I mixed it was very background. He sent it back and said, 'No, no, no, no, no. This sounds great, but [give me] more.' He really wanted a blasting — in certain sections, it's just me, like a soloist."

Zorn has had no involvement to date with Patton's highest-profile project, Fantômas. The group, named after a French detective from an early 20th century series of novels and concurrent films (and later a Mexican comic book hero), is an avant Metal dream team. Zane Osborn, formerly of The Melvins plays guitar; Trevor Dunn, formerly of Mr Bungle, is the bassist; and behind the drum kit sits Dave Lombardo, best known for his work with Metal masters Slayer but also the engine behind numerous side projects, including his recent Drums Dr Death collaboration with DJ Spooky, and a few Zorn albums (Taboo And Dele, Children's Music). "It was like writing down a Christmas list, and it wasn't a very deep one," says Patton. "I got all my first choices. I didn't know that they would respond to it. I knew Buzz, but not that well. Trevor was really my only sure thing, he was like the security blanket, meaning if it all went belly-up, I could cry on his shoulder." Lombardo is Patton's ace in the hole — and he knows it. "I saw Slayer a little while ago with Dave, and I'd seen them when I was a teenager of course, and loved it to death," Patton recalls. "But seeing them again, and seeing how effortless that music is to him — I thought I even saw him play a couple of times, while bashing his brains out and driving that band. With Fantasy, Lombardo gets to play much more than just the Death Metal blast beats he helped invent. He welcomes the challenge, according to Patton. "Over the years, I always thought he was great, but playing with him, and making him jump through every hoop imaginable and watching him do it — he's wide-eyed. Any bizarre suggestion or anything that might be unfamiliar to him — 'Yeah, sure, why not? Let's try it! This is great!' He's

just so excited about this stuff that it's energizing and empowering."

Having a supportive group is crucial (in a 'consent of the governed' sort of way: Fantômas is anything but a democracy). Sure, Patton was assembling a bunch of guys he wanted to make music with, but rather than waiting to see what came out of that creative confluence, he brought them together to perform a specific set of tunes, in a very particular way. "Like I do with nearly everything I write, I basically made a rough recording of myself playing all the instruments, which can be very comical. When you're starting a band, it's like a chemical experiment. You don't know how guys are gonna respond, especially to music that's as angular and abstract as Fantômas is. I didn't know how Lombardo was gonna hear this. I had no idea." All four of their releases to date have been recorded in the same way: "I write down everything, put it on a tape, and say, 'That's it. Play it.' And you know, a lot of it's hard to decipher, so I'll have to sit down with Buzz or Dave and show them exactly what I want, and if there's a part that comes along — well, I'm open to suggestion, let's put it that way. But that music is, more so than any of my other groups, about precision and execution. There is a right and a wrong way of playing it. And I really feel like my role is to illustrate very clearly what to do and what not to do."

The group's self-titled debut from 1999 mimicked a CD and featured 31 tracks, each named for a page and listing a number of frames, or panels, of action. The only track that didn't follow this pattern was number 13, which was two seconds of run-off from track 12. Patton explains, "I've always been curious about what you can and can't do when indexing tracks on a CD. I wondered if you could skip one. You can't. If you notice, on the CDs, track 13 appears. It goes for one and a half seconds, which is the bare minimum that it can be, and I indexed it at the end of 12 so you barely notice it. But it does appear, for one and a half seconds. I never really got rid of it. And initially, I just thought I wanted to have an idiosyncratic thing on the Fantômas records, and I want to keep it that way every time. I chose 13 for obvious bad luck and protection reasons, and wanted to keep doing it throughout all of our records. But after [2004's] Delirium Cordia, I realised I'd broken the mould, so fuck it."

That Fantômas debut, which was also the inaugural release from Patton's Ipecac label, set the mould for the group's future albums. The music has all the precision of Prog rock, but it's as compressed as Grindcore. The longest piece is just over four minutes, the shortest just under 30 seconds. Each track features multiple riffs, which rarely repeat, and there are no solos. During the slower moments, guitarist Osborn's fetish for heaviness as its own reward comes to the fore, as the group burrow into a post-Sabbath trench before launching itself over the top, into another high-speed assault. Patton, for his part, refuses to seize the foreground. His voice is clearly present but it's in the middle of the mix, just one more instrument, and there are no lyrics, only shouted interjections, screams, roars and babble. This was a strategy denied in part (as might be expected) from Yonatan Katsen's work with Haken's new, equally from John Tardy's gravel-groaning work on Slowly We Rot, the 1989 debut CD from Florida sludge-Metal unit. Obituary. (Tardy, not wanting to have his group pigeonholed alongside the knuckle-dragging sadists of the nascent Death Metal scene, chose not to print lyrics for their songs inside the album. What he was singing was indecipherable. Rather than form words, he howled like a despairing ape, or ranted

incomprehensibly like the lunatic nobody wants to sit next to on the bus.)

"Believe it or not, you totally nailed it," Patton laughs, when I mention Obituary. "When I — how old was I? I was probably 18 or 19 when that record came out. I thought the guy was a fucking genius, because there were no words. There were certain little phrases, like 'wuuugh' and 'aaagh', and that really hit me at the time. I realised he was using the voice as an instrument within a song form. Especially with that form of music, that is genius, because no one knows. There's nothing to say anyway. It's a sound. Better than then hearing him talk about dismembering some virgin. Since a lot of it comes from small towns or suburbs, it's really a great rediscovered American folk music. Death Metal."

The second Fantômas album, The Director's Cut (2001), was a little lighter in spirit than the debut. A collection of 15 movie themes reinterpreted in thrashy fashion, on first listen it feels more of a lark than its predecessor, possibly because all covers projects (even when thematically unified) are frequently the last resort of the uninspired. But Patton, through Fantômas, is actually on to something with The Director's Cut. Movie scores, even heard without their accompanying visuals, are frequently more dramatic than music originally intended to stand alone. Patton's interpretations of these pieces, which mostly start out a little on the sedate side before becoming the scuffling outbursts Fantômas fans expect, retain the innate drama of scores, while compensating the music to dense armour-piercing bullets of sound. As on the debut, track lengths run between one and four minutes, and the whole disc contains only 42 minutes of music.

Despite the thematic connections to comic books and movies made explicit on the first two discs, Fantômas have never made a video, nor even included any visual accompaniments to the music on their CDs. Patton seems to view this as practically a charitable gesture on his part. "I think the music is complicated enough," he says. "There's enough information in there — you wouldn't need any more stimuli with this music, in my opinion. It's already borderline overkill. That's why we make short records, that's why there are no lyrics, no proper words — you can only handle so much information and at a certain point your ears just shut down. At least mine do."

The group's third release, Delirium Cordia, makes this point explicit. It really isn't the kind of thing one hauls off the shelf on a daily basis. A 75 minute work, it's composed of dozens of sections but programmed as a single epic track. The music is punctuated by sounds evocative of the operating table — beeps, mechanical respiration and the subdued, businesslike conversational tones of expert surgeons. It's rough going, shifting from thrash to Dark Ambient interludes to jazz-like chording and back through all those sounds and more, for just under an hour, followed by 15 minutes of a needle gently scraping a record's nanot groove. Chorus moans softly, gongs ring out, huge guitar riffs hit like slabs of concrete falling from the sky.

"I wanted to force people to listen to it as one piece of music," says Patton. "Unless you were swallowing it as one giant pill, it would never have the same effect. And at that regard, it was much more like contemporary classical music. They weren't songs. They weren't pieces. They weren't frames. They weren't little cells of music. I wanted it to really come off as a monolithic, larger than life experience, like sitting on the operating table or anything else. I wanted it to be long, drawn out and painful."

The recording process might have been nearly as agonising as the listening experience. "It had a zillion parts, and there were only certain sections where I



know what the final arrangement was going to be," Patton recalls. "And I kind of kept them in the dark about it. I said, 'Don't worry about it, you'll hear it in the end and let's just do these'—I don't know, it was divided into maybe 50 something parts, some of which were band pieces but a lot of them weren't. Most of them were overdubs on top of things that I'd done at home. I didn't want it to sound like a rock band, I didn't want it to sound like us. I wanted it to sound like a contemporary music ensemble. So we basically rented a bunch of instruments, I had Dave playing mostly gongs and orchestral percussion."

The brand new Fantomas disc, *Suspended Animation*, couldn't be more different from its predecessor. A collection of 30 staccato noise-bursts, one for each day in the month of April, it is packaged with a lavish calendar/booklet, illustrated by Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara, and the sounds are even more bizarre and compelling than the packaging. It's a sort of second cousin to Naked City's infamous 1988 thrash jazz collage, *Torture Garden*, except that where the Zom disc pirated through every style of music under the sun, *Suspended Animation* mostly vocalizes between furious Grindcore and the swoops, squiggles and springs of cartoon music. In addition to Patton's hyperactive vocals, samples from children's *Speak & Spell* toys are heard, spelling out the word *Fantomas* and telling the listener to sing a song, or play again, it even ends with the sampled voice of Bugs Bunny, from the iconic classic *What's Opera, Doc?*. The range of influences, from Spike Jones to Napoleon Death, and the way they've been totally subsumed into Mike Patton's vision, is almost pasciendous. It's impossible to hear everything *Fantomas* are doing with one listen. As he says himself, even their more lighthearted moments (and he claims *Suspended Animation* is "our Romper Room-style, caffeinated children's record") teeter on the brink of sonic overkill. Like Grindcore maniacs Agoraphobic Nosebleed, who pack their 45-second songs with answering machine messages, blasting drum machines, sampled rants from cult horror movies and unearthly screeches, *Fantomas* attack from all sides at once, with the precision of a sharpshooter on crystal meth. The mind-boggling discipline required to execute their manoeuvres is just one more thing that sets them apart from any other musical unit around. All the more so, when one reflects that *Delium Corda* and *Suspended Animation* were recorded in the same block of sessions. "We were bouncing back and forth depending on what instruments were around or what people were around, the entire time," Patton says. "We'd do a cartoonish band piece for the newest record, then ten minutes later we'd be working on a drone for the *Delium* record. The only record I really had mapped out was *Delium*, and I knew I'd have a little time to work out the specifics of the children's record."

It would be journalistically convenient, at this point, to attempt some kind of rationalisation—say, that the emergence of *Fantomas* as a 'real group' (with tours, band catalogue, etc) was what inspired Patton to strike out on a new project that could hardly be more different from *Fantomas*, by hooking up with some of the US's most devious turntable artists: Rob Swift, Red Rada and Total Eclipse, collectively known as The Xecutioners. But there's really no larger explanation for this existence of this *General Patton Vs The Xecutioners* than the Occam's razor one: it was what he felt like doing. "This was something I'd been thinking about for five or six years," he says. "I knew I wanted to make a record with turntables only, and preferably a crew of a few guys. It took a while to figure out who would be up for this kind of venture. I talked

to Q-Bert [DJ with Invisibl Skratch Pikitz]. I did a few gigs with some other people here in San Francisco, all of which was great. Then, a couple of years later, I played some live gigs with The Xecutioners and man, they were up for anything. Absolutely loose, voracious, they had no idea what I was gonna do—I don't think they knew if I was gonna be singing songs, or lyrics or anything, they just said, 'Let's just hit'. And they busted my chops, and were listening, and we really had a nice connection, I felt. We did a few more gigs, and I decided, these are the guys."

The move shouldn't shock anyone who's been following Patton's career over the years. From Faith No More's collaboration with Smeared gangsta rappers Boo-Ya Tribe to David Shea's work on the first Mr Bungle album, turntables have been a frequent presence in his work. The disc, though, is a surprise. It's almost totally free of the masturbatory wiggly-wiggly antics that show up on so many scratch records. Part of this is due to The Xecutioners, of course, who've always been more interested in layered rhythms than needle-busting antics. But Patton's vision was a subtle one too. "I've always been fascinated with the speed with which the turntable can execute," he explains. "It's an incredibly powerful instrument, and most of the time it's used for mecho acrobatic displays, and contests. Turntables are used in a really sporting way, and I kinda wanted to use them musically, show them off and really expose the power of them, because I think the speed with which you can change, literally as fast as you can drop a needle is how fast you can move with these things. To me, it's like having the ultimate band behind you. It's like having a million bands behind you. Although it has confrontational, soundblast elements, the ultimate goal was to integrate." Integrate he does—his voice is only discernible on perhaps half a dozen of the album's 23 tracks. On all the others, he might be there, but he's filtered through effects or otherwise relegated to the background. This is deliberate—Patton wanted to make his voice sound like another turntable for the disc.

His next project (as should be obvious at this point, there's always a next project) is a solo album, to be released on Ipecac under the name Peeping Tom. For some reason neither Patton nor I can fathom, this is the project of his that seems to have fans most excited. He's been working on it, off and on, for a few years now, maybe that's the reason for the fascination on Internet message boards. Based on his description, though, it's hard not to imagine widespread confusion, if not disillusionment, greeting the eventual product. "It's an exercise," he says. "Can I real all these impulses in for a three-minute song? And it's proven to be quite a challenge. Verses, choruses, a couple of departure points and wrap it all up in a bow. I'm having a fuckin' blast doing it. Does that mean it's going to get on the radio? Hell, no!"

"Instead of putting a band together for it," he continues, "I decided to play everything myself, because it's not too technically virtuosic, let's say, and I decided to do it with different producers. I did hire a few different musicians, and there are a few guest vocalists and whatnot, but for the most part it's me collaborating with different producers, which I've never really done. Anon Tobin is doing some stuff with me, some of the guys from *CLUQUERO* on the *Antidote* label. Can't remember if I'm doing a few—who else? Muggs from Cypress Hill, Richard Devine... it's a best-of record for sure. But by the same token, there's a ballad thing or two, there's their choir stuff, there's string sections, I'm doing a duet with Bebel Gilberto on a Brazilian tune—it gets all over the place. But it has elements of what I hear to be pop and have heard to be pop." Clearly, dependent as it is

on technological advances and the aesthetics that have come with them, this is an album that couldn't have been made a decade ago. But there are decided pitfalls to that approach. "Sending files back and forth through the mail, there's an incredible margin for error," says Patton. "It's not the impersonal part that bothers me, but it's hard to describe the way you want things to sound in a fucking email, or even over the telephone. The one good thing is, with all the time that's elapsed, I've got over 30 pieces, which is enough for two records. So that's the bright side."

Patton's flexibility and relentless creativity are unique in contemporary music, rock or otherwise. What's fascinating is that he's managed to retain a fanbase while pursuing so many seemingly oppositional and quixotic projects. Of course, that fanbase isn't necessarily one many artists would choose. A visit to Ipecac's online message board reveals a disturbingly high number of people who seem to view the ability to offend passers-by with one's musical selections as *prima facie* evidence of intellectual superiority. Patton takes it all in his stride, though. "I learned long ago that there's absolutely no control I have over it," he says. "They're like relatives out there—you can't choose 'em. A lot of people assume that if I'm doing something that isn't 'fuck you' from top to bottom, then I've lost my edge, or there's nothing interesting about what I'm doing anymore." He's somewhat obligated to be forgiving of his fans, since by his own admission, he's only recently begun to outgrow his own fuckwad phase. "When I was younger, we would put ourselves in compromising positions," he recalls. "Like opening for Billy Idol or Robert Plant, when conventional wisdom would say, 'Why? Are you gonna sell any more records? Are you gonna make a lot of money? No, there's nothing good that's gonna come out of it.' We did get off on being in those positions. And it does teach you some sort of militant kind of endurance, when whiskey bottles are flying past your head and 50,000 people are booing you. I've been in that situation with lots of bands, and it's been uplifting in a strange, sort of teenage way. It's us versus them, and fuck 'em if they can't take a joke. But as you get older—although I'm sure I'll be in more positions like that—that becomes less and less what it's about for me. Like I say, my music these days is problematic enough. It's hard enough just to get it played right. We're gonna do it because it's less important, more important, less important, and once the bullshit outweighs what's going on, it's time to pull the plug and move on."

So who knows? Maybe Mike Patton's fans will not only continue to follow him, but even catch up with him one of these days. Whether the larger music world will ever fully come to grips with his achievement is less predictable. But he's so used to being on the outside, he probably wouldn't come in if he was invited. "I've come to a point in my life where I've realised that nothing I do is going to be straight or pure or fit in a specific genre or even be well-liked by the masses," Patton concludes. "I know it's always going to have a freakish hybrid or some weird fingerprint on it, and it's beyond my control and I've completely accepted it and am very comfortable with it now. In a sense, that's why I started my own record label. I'm moving forward and trying my best to create my own little world, because I know that no matter how hard I try, that's the only way for me. I'm a little, and people, no matter what they say or do, can only change so much. You gotta accept who you are." □ *General Patton Vs The Xecutioners and Fantomas's *Suspended Animation* are out this month on Ipecac. Naked City: The Complete Studio Recordings is out now on Tzadik. www.ipccac.com*



The Primer

A BI-MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE CORE RECORDINGS
OF A PARTICULAR ARTIST OR GENRE



GRIME

THIS MONTH: SIMON REYNOLDS SCRUBS AWAY THE RESIDUE OF TWO-STEP AND GARAGE CROSSOVER TO REVEAL GRIME, THE BUSTLING AND HIGHLY COMPETITIVE UK MICROCULTURE OF PRODUCERS AND MCS WHOSE RAPPING OVER CHEAP 'N' NASTY SYNTH-FUELLED RIDDIMS HAS EXTENDED GRIME'S REACH FROM PIRATE RADIO TO THE TOP 20.

ILLUSTRATION: SAVAGE PENCIL



Grime emerged from London's pirate radio underground. Its immediate precursor was two-step (aka UK Garage), which at the turn of the millennium was making a powerful breakthrough into the UK pop mainstream. Two-step had been shaped by the so-called 'feminine pressure' for singalong melodies and wendy-west grooveiness. Grime arose as a backlash against this crossover sound, a violent swing in the scene's inner gender-pendulum from yes to yang. But went two-step's high-pitched diva vocals, sensual swing and sexed-up amorosities; in came gruff rapping, stiff electronic-influenced beats and raucous aggression.

MCs have been part of the pirate radio tradition for at least 15 years, going back through Garage and Jungle to the early days of Hardcore rave. By the end of the 90s, however, the MCs were moving beyond their customary restricted role as party 'hosts' and sidekicks to the DJ. Instead of gimmicky vocal licks and praise-the-selector exhortations, they began to rap actual verses – initially, extended takes on traditional boasts about their own mic skills, but soon getting into narrative, complicated metaphors and rhyme schemes, vicious dissing of rivals and even introspective soliloquies. The MC's rise swiftly eclipsed the DJ, hitherto the most prominent figure on rave flyers or the main designated act on record releases. 2001 was the turning point, when MCs shunted selectors out of the spotlight. So Solid Crew broke into the pop charts and the underground seethed with similar collectives modelled on the clan/dynasty structures that prevail in American Hip-hop and Jamaican dancehall.

Emerging from the transitional sound known as 'Garage rap', Grime really defined itself as a distinct genre when the first tracks appeared that were designed purely as MC tools – riddims for rappers to ride. These Grime-instruments were largely sourced in the electro diaspora – post-'Sking Tling' regga, Miami Bass, New Orleans bounce, Dirty South crunk and street rap producers like Swiss Beats. Like these genres, Grime started to go in much for sampling but prefers synths, typically with cheap 'n' nasty timbres that vaguely evoke the 80s and often seem to be influenced by pulp movie video soundtracks, videogame music and even mobile phone ringtones. But in Grime's textured beats and complex programming you can also hear the impulse of the Jungle that most of these late teens/early twenties producers grew up on, alongside full-memory traces of Gabba and Techno. Sometimes you might imagine you can hear uncanny echoes of post-punk era electro-punkists such as The Normal, DAF, Cabaret Voltaire, or the calligraphic exquisiteness of Japan, Thomas Leer and The Residents.

Inherited from the period when two-step ruled the Top Ten, but also inspired by enviously watching the living-large of American rap superstars, Grime feels a powerful drive to invade the mainstream and get 'paid in full'. Pirate radio, a broadcast medium with a potentially vast audience, encourages this grandiosity. One peculiar byproduct of Grime's ambition is the scene's craze for DAD releases, like *Risky Road* and *Lord Of The Mic*, containing documentary material with live footage. It's as if the scene is DYing the sort of TV coverage it feels it deserves but isn't getting. Yet while some top MCs are being groomed for stardom by major-owned boutique labels, the day to day reality of Grime is grafting to get by in a narrowcast culture. Selling 500 copies of a track is considered a good result. The way Grime operates – small-run vinyl-only pressings and mixtapes, often sold directly to

specialist stores – has a surprising amount in common with other musical movements. Grime is what Rel's Chris Cutler would call an 'engaged' culture, with a high ratio of performers to consumers. These aspiring MCs, DJs and producers have a deeper understanding of what constitutes skill and innovation in their scene. Grime even has an improvised element, with its freestyles and MC battles. There's a glorious ephemeralty to the way MCs riff off-the-cuff lyrics during pre-recorded sessions, although fans have always recorded the shows and some are now getting archived on the Web.

Unlike those globally dispersed musical scenes such as noise or extreme Metal, Grime is geographically concentrated. It's popular across London and has outposts in other UK cities, but its absolute heartland consists of a few square miles in that part of East London not served by the Tube. In truth, it's a parochial scene, obsessed with a sense of place, riven by interclan conflicts and territorial rivalries (the intense competitiveness being one reason Grime's so creative). Still, despite this insularity, Grime has never been easier for 'outsiders' to investigate, thanks to 1xtra (the BBC's digital radio station for UK 'urban' music, www.bbc.co.uk/1xtra/radio/garage/; check especially the weekly shows by Cameo and Richie Vee), the trend for pirates like Rinse FM to go online as well as broadcast terrestrially, mail order via companies like Rhythm Division (www.rhythmdivision.co.uk/home.asp) and Independence (www.independence-records.co.uk/ug.htm), and the swarm of blogs covering the scene.

SO SOLID CREW DILEMMA SO SOLID 12" 1609 OXIDE & NEUTRINO BOUND 4 DA RELOAD (CASUALTY) EAST WEST 12" 1600

So Solid are famous as the first MC crew to cross over big time (they hit number one with '21 Seconds'), and infamous for their frequent brushes with the law. In Grime terms, though, their single most influential track is this instrumental, which replaced two-step's sultry swing with an electro-driven coldness and rigour. This new starkness was a timely move given that two-step had reached the inevitable 'over-ripe' phase that affects all dance genres, its beats becoming cluttered and fuzzy, with its hand-angled drum machine sounds and single-note sustained bassline veering upward in pitch. 'Dilemma' rediscovered the Kraftwerk principle: inflexibility can sometimes be funnier than suppleness. So solid, indeed: 'Dilemma' is like a huge block of ice in the middle of the dancefloor, a real vice-chiller.

So Solid affiliates DJ Dude and MC Neutrino also scored a number one UK hit with 'Bound 4 Da Reload'. Initially a pirate radio anthem in 1999, 'Reload' created a massive rift in the Garage scene. Older types loathed it, young 'uns loved it. Today's Grime heads would probably disown their teenage favourite as a mere novelty track. Which it certainly was, from the Casualty TV theme sample to the 'can everyone stop getting shot?' soundtrack from the UK gangster film *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels*. Gimmicks aside, Oxide's production is heavy, from the ice-cold punchy drums (strings of death, perhaps), given the track's allusions to the rising bloodshed of violence on London's streets) to the doom-bomb of sub-bass to the morgue-chilly echo swathing much of the record. Probably equally repellent to two-step fans was the nagging, nasal insistence of Neutrino's

rapping, which is remorselessly unmelodic but horribly catchy. Instantly transforming two-step from 'the sound of now' to its current nostalgia night status as Dild Skool, 'Reload' has strong claims to being the first Grime tune.

PAY AS U GO KARTEL KNOW WE SOLID CITY 12" 1601 WILEY & ROLL DEEP TERRIBLE SOLID CITY 12" 1601

Circling on a dubplate as early as 1999, 'Know We' was in constant pirate rotation by the time of its 2001 release, alongside 'Terrible'. Both are back-to-basics affairs: simple programmed beats, in each case adorned with the solitary hook of a violin flourish, functioning purely as a vehicle for the MCs. Another striking shared characteristic is the use of the first person plural. Each MC bigs up himself when it's his turn on the mic, but at the chorus individualism is subsumed in a collective thrust for prestige. 'Now we're going on terrible,' promise/threaten Roll Deep, and they don't mean they're about to give a weak performance – 'roll deep' itself meaning marauding around town as a mob. But there's a hint of precociousness to Pay As U Go's assertions of universal renown. The sense of grandeur is latent; they're not stars yet. What does come through loud and clear on both tracks is the hunger. 'Terrible' starts with a Putt Daddi soundtrack: 'Sometimes I don't think you motherfuckers understand where I'm coming from, where I'm trying to get to.' Both the PAUG and Roll Deep tracks were produced by a young prodigy named Wiley, whose catchphrase back then was, 'They call me William/I'm gonna make a million.' Roll Deep are Grime's NWA (and its ranks have included such luminaries as Dizzee Rascal, Riko, Flow Dan, Trim and Darryl Weed), with Wiley as its Dr Dre. If he's yet to make that first million, this human dynamo must surely have released closer to that number of tracks these last four years.

GENIUS CRU COURSE BRUV KNOW 12" 1601

The gangsta rap companion isn't an idle one. PAUG and Roll Deep pioneered criminal-minded lyrics. Taking them literally isn't always advisable, as the imagery of 'slaving' and 'mockery' is often purely metaphorical, signifying the destruction of rival MCs in verbal combat, the maiming of egos rather than bodies. Still, the genre wasn't always so relentlessly hostile. Just before the Grime era, Garage rap outfits like Heartless Crew and Genius Cru exuded playful bonhomie. The follow-up to their number 12 pop hit 'Boom Selection', Genius's 'Course Bruv' talks about spreading 'nauff love' in the club and stresses that they 'still don't wanna hurt nobody'. The chorus even celebrates the rave-era ritual of sharing your soft drinks with complete strangers, the 'course bruv' being Genius's gracious acquiescence to 'can I have a sip of that?' Producer Capone weaves an effervescent merry-go-round groove of chiming bass melody and giddy loopy stings, while the MCs hypnotise with the sheer bubbling fluidity of their chat. The verses are deliberately preposterous plays wish-fulfillment: 'Number one brexwiner' Kellon claims he's 'invested in many shares, many many stocks' while Fizzy purports to date 'celeb chicks', 'bawlienas' and even have 'hot chicks as my household cleaners'.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
KANO, WILEY, D DOUBLE E, JAMMER



PLATINUM 45 FEATURING MORE FIRE OIL

GO! BEAT 12" 2002

Pirate radio culture evolves in small increments, month by month. The onset of one era or sub-flava overlaps with the twilight of its predecessor. There are rarely clean breaks. Still, every so often a track comes along that yells "IT'S THE NEW STYLE!" in your face. "Dil" was one of them. Drawing on the most anti-pop, street vanguard elements in black music history – ragga's twitch 'n' ruff, electro's fringidity, jump-up jungle's bruising base blows – producer Platinum 45 created a most unlikely number seven hit. Factor in the barely decipherable jibber of More Fire's Lethal B, Ozze B and Neeko, and the result was one of the most abrasively alien Top Of The Pops appearances ever. The tune's pogo-like hard-boiled bass and uncouth Cockney-ragga chants mean that "Dil" has more in common with Cockney Rejects-style punk than you'd imagine. "Dil" was Grime's biggest hit to date, before the genre even had a name.

MUSICAL MOB PULSE X (VIP MIX) INSPIRED SOUNDS 12" 2003

Widely regarded at the time as UK Garage's absolute nadir, "Pulse X" is actually a pivotal track: the scene's first purpose-built MC tool. Locating a new rhythm at the exact intersection of electro and Gabba, "Pulse" is virtually unlistenable – those dead-eyed claps, those rambling convulsive licks – on its own. But in combination with a great MC, the skeletal rhythm becomes an instant, massive intravenous jolt of pure adrenalin. It's not just the headbanging energy, though, it's the track's very structure that is radical. "Pulse X" was the first eight-bar tune, so-called because the rhythm switches every eight bars, thereby enabling MCs to take turns to drop 16 bars of rhymes using both beat patterns. Far from being UK Garage's death rattle, "Pulse X" rescued the scene, rudderless and demoralised after two-step's pop bubble burst. The sheer phantasmic rigour of "Pulse X" gave the scene a spine and a forward direction.

DIZEE RASCAL 1 LUV UVEDX XL 12" 2003

Circling as a white label from summer 2002 onwards, "1 Luv U" turned London pirate culture around as much as "Pulse X". Legendarily creating the track in a single afternoon during a school music class, Dizze took the same sort of sounds Musical Mob used – Gabba-like distorted kickdrums, shearing metal claps – and turned them into actual music. Add a teenage MC genius desperate to announce himself to the world and you have Grime's "Anarchy In The UK". The punk parallel applies because of the harsh Englishness of Dizze's vocal timbre and the lovelessness of the lyric, which depicts the pitfalls of the era, dating game from the POV of too-much-too-young 16-year-olds whose hearts have been calloused into premature cynicism. Dizze's snotty derision is almost eclipsed by the retort from female MC Jeanne Jacques, who throws "That girl's some bitch yunno" back in his face with the equally corrosive: "That boy's some witok yunno". The original white label featured the "Luv U" instrumental but tossed away on the XL rerelease's B-side is the classic "Uved". Dizze's stressed delivery makes you picture steam coming out of his ears and the music – beats like ice floes cracking, shrill synth-

RIGHT: LETHAL B

trangles – renders obsolete the entire previous half-decade of retro-electro in one foul swoop.

WILEY ESKIMO WILEY KAT RECORDINGS 12" 2005 ICE RINK WILEY KAT RECORDINGS 12" 2003

Ex-PAUG but at this point still Rolling Deep, Wiley invented an entire mini-genre of low key, enigmatic instrumentals: asymmetrically structured grooves based around a sinister B-line that "Slingshot" downbeats (as DJ Paul Kennedy put it) and gliding, fragmentary melodies. From his legion of Imitators, these tended to be strictly MC-functional beats, but in Wiley's case, more often than not the tracks are highly listenable standalone aesthetic objects even without rhyming. The first in an ongoing series of ice-themed tunes ("Iglou", "Frostbite", "Snowkat", et al), "Eskimo" was the blueprint for this dirty-yet-creaky micro-genre (which Wiley dubbed "Eskibeat"). "Ice Rink" took the concept of MC tool to the next level, instead of just being sold as an instrumental for MCs to use, it was released in some eight versions featuring different MCs. Spread across two 12"s, "Ice Rink" constituted a *de facto* riddim album. Dizze's turn is the standout. His scrawny voice oozing the impudence of someone at the top of his game, as he invites all haters to plant their lips upon his posterior: "Kiss from the left to the right/Kiss till my black bum-cheeks turn white." Wiley's play of gated doorknob kicks and mercury-splash bips jostles with Dizze for your attention.

JAMMER WEED MAN HOT SOUND 12" 2003 JAMMER FEATURING D DOUBLE E BIRDS IN THE SKY HOT SOUND 12" 2003

2003 saw a slew of eight-bar instrumentals suffused with colonialist exoticism. As incongruous as a pagoda plopped smack dab in the centre of Bow, "Weed Man" is the supreme example of "sinoGrime". Hyperbolic Wetone's term for this micro-genre. Produced by Nasty Crew's Jammer, the track is dedicated to "all the marijuana smokers" and appropriately the tempo is torpid to a TripHop-like degree. The loping, sprained rhythm flashes back to Sylvia Sakamoto's "Bambo Music", while the ceremonial bassline and breathy flute conjure mind's eye imagery of Zen gardens and temples. But where Wiley's similar excursions Eastwards were fuelled by record-buying trips to Sterns, Jammer most likely derided his notion of oriental mystery from videogame music and martial arts movie soundtracks. "Birds In The Sky" has a similarly medieval atmosphere but, apart from the plucky twang of some kind of stringed Far Eastern instrument, is less obviously an ethnological forgery. The solo debut of one of Grime's greatest MCs, D Double E, "Birds" has a brooding meditative aura. The lyric pivots around the bizarre trope of a verbal drive-by. The MC firing off word-bullets "Like birds in the sky/Hit one of your brothers in the eye".

RIKO & TARGET CHOSEN ONE AM HIGH 12" 2004 RUFF SQUAD LETHAL INJECTION WHITE LABEL 12" 2004

Former PAUG stalwart and man behind the ace Am

High compilations, Target here creates one of Grime's most strikingly cinematic aces, placing a heart-tugging orchestral refrain amid a strange deconstructed drum track whose furries of claps and kicks seem to trip over themselves. This groove's sensation of impeded yet steadfast forward motion fits the lyric's theme of determination and destiny. In his smoky, polo-tinged bantone, Riko (another PAUG alumnus) counsels calmness and composure to all those struggling, whether they're aspiring MCs striving to make it or regular folk trying to make it through everyday strife: "Use your head to battle through/cause you are the chosen one." The synth swells favoured by Ruff Squad also have a cinematic grandeur, like gangsta Vangelis. "Lethal Injection", though, is one of their more minimal efforts, consisting of a wibbly keyboard line, the boom of a heavily echoed kick drum and the Squad's rapid-fire jabber, swathed in a saturating spray of reverb and background chat. Not a tear-jerker like "Chosen One", but incredibly atmospheric.

TERROR DANJAH INDUSTRY STANDARD EP AFTERSHOCK 12" 2003 VARIOUS PAY BACK EP (THE REMIX) AFTERSHOCK 12" 2003

You could justly describe Terror Danjah as one of the most accomplished electronic musicians currently active. On tracks like "Jugging" and "Sneak Attack", the intricate syncopation, textured beats, spatulated production, and "abstract sounds" (Danjah's own phrase) makes this "headphone Grime" – not something that could be claimed for too many operators on the scene. Yet all this finesse is marshalled in service of a fanatically doomy and monolithic mood. Gothic in the original barbarian invader meaning. The atmosphere of dominating darkness is distilled in Danjah's audio-log, a demonic cackle that resembles some jeering, leering cyborg death-dwarf, which appears in all of his productions and remixes. "Creep Crawler", the first tune on *Industry Standard*, and its sister track "Frontline" (Creep Crawler Mix), which kicks off *Pay Back*, are Danjah's sound at its most pungently oppressive. "Creep Crawler" begins with the producer smirking along ("Hell heh, they're gonna hate me now"), then a bonecrusher beat stomps everything in its path, while ominous horn blasts pummel in the lower midrange and synths wince like the onset of a migraine. From its opening "something wicked this way comes" note sequence onwards, Big ED's original "Frontline" was hair-raising already. Danjah's remix of his acolyte's monster-tune essentially merges it with "Creep Crawler", deploying the same astral synth dissonance and trademark bass-blare fanfares (filtered to create a weird sensation of suppressed bombast) but to even more intimidating and shudder-inducing effect.

MARK ONE VERSUS PLASTICMAN HARD GRAFT 1/HARD GRAFT 2 CROSSGEMS 12" 2003

LOEFAB BOWHAY SQUAD FROM WARZONES, DITAM 2 (REPELLED) CDS 2004

If you hadn't already guessed from the name, Grime invents values. Dirty, stinky, even disgusting – all are positive attributes in Grime parlance. So when I say "Hard Graft" is utterly dismal, you'll know this is the Shamus up. Grime often represents itself as gutter



music. Merik One and Plasticman go further and deeper with this track, plunging into the sewage system. Full of clanking beats, septic gurglings, eerie echoes and scuttling percussion, "Hard Graft" makes you imagine pipes, storm drains, dank chambers.

Mark One, Plasticman and their cohorts constitute not so much a subgenre of Grime as a side genre, running adjacent to the scene proper. The sound is lo-fi, MC-free and more disposable than Grime. Although a number of black producers are involved, you could fairly describe this style's sonic coding as whiter than Grime, and situate it on a Euro continuum running through Belgian Industrial Techno (Mens Syndicate, BD Aum), through the cold Technoid end of rave (Nebula II) to No U-Turn's Techstep and Phoebe's Neurofunk (the beats on "Hard Graft" sometimes recall his "Ni Ten Ichu Ryu"). Plasticman's proximity to the Richie Hawtin dias seems telling.

The black component to this side genre is dub. Loefah's clanking skank connects to a lineage of Industrial/rotational UK music: DnU, bleep 'n' bass, The Drib, Techno-Animal. "Bombay Squad" is built around what feels like a half-finished, or partially erased, groove: massive echo-laden snare cracks, a liquid pitter of tabla situated in a localised corner of the mix and... that's it, apart from the dark river of sub-bass that propels the track forward. The title's intertextual traces include Public Enemy's producers and 2 Bad Mice's sex anthem "Bentonscale", but actually allude to the track's sole coloration, the plaintive wail of a Bollywood diva.

WONDER

WHAT

DUMPHOLDS 12" 2004

SLK

HYPE! HYPE! (DJ WONDER REFIX)

SMOKE/MINISTRY OF SOUND 12" 2003

Wonder works on the cusp between Grime proper and the Plasticman One/Loefah sound. "What" makes something compellingly atmospheric out of the most meagre components: a beat dragging like a wounded leg, sub-bass yawning ominously like a portal into the underworld, a detected one-finger melody suggestive of an autistic desultorily toying with a xylophone, occasional dark blips of electronics. Overall, the audio mess on scene is something like 'twilight falls on the battle-scarred moon'. Also vaguely reminiscent of The Mover's gloomy brand of Ambient Dubstep, Wonder's "Hype! Hype!" replaces the perky original backing track (produced by the great Sticky) with a green-drone of sick Technoid. This catastrophe in slow-mo makes a marvelously incongruous backdrop for the roaring vocal hook chanted by North West London crew SLK.

JAMMER FEATURING KANO

BOYS LOVE GIRLS

HOT SOUND 12" 2003

WONDER FEATURING KANO

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE

NEW ERA 12" 2004

TERROR DANJAH FEATURING KANO & SADIE

SO SURE

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2004

The backing tracks are fabulous – Jammer's frenetic snare-roll clatter, Wonder's tonally baroque synths, Danjah's echoing ripples of hi-fi, electronic – but it's MC Kano who really shines. With some Grime rhyesters, the flow resembles an involuntary

discharge (D Double E being the ultimate exponent of MCing as automatic poetry). But even at his most hectic, as on "Boys Love Girls", Kano always sounds in complete control. All pose and deliberation, he invariably sounds like he's weighing up the angles, calculating his moves, calibrating which outcomes serve his interests. That's blatant on "Boys" and "What Have You Done", both cold-hearted takes on modern romance that depict sex as transactional terms, a ledger of positives and misuses, credits and debits: a war of the genders in which keeping your feelings checked and maintaining distance is strategically crucial. But it comes through even in the gorgeous ballad "So Sure", on which Kano blurs the border between loverman and soldier drawing up plans for conquest: "Ain't got time to be one of them guys just watching you and wasting time/Next time I'm clocking you I'm stopping you to make you mine." As much as the acutely observed lyrical details, it's the timbre of Kano's voice that's enthralling: slick yet grainy, like varnished wood, and knotty with halting cadences that convince you he's thinking these thoughts aloud for the very first time.

DAVINCHE

DIRTY CANVAS EP

INTERCHAI RECORDINGS 12" 2004

ESSENTIALS

HEADQUARTERS

WHITE LABEL 12" 2004

"So Sure" is an example of the burgeoning subgenre R&G, basically a transparent attempt to lure the ladies back onto the floor, after they'd been turned off by the testosterone-heavy vibe of tracks more suitable for moshing than sexy dancing. As the name R&G, short for 'rhythm and Grime', suggests, the mingie-erica replicates two-step's original move of copying American R&B's luxurious arrangements and dance-melisma. Nonsensical Terror Danjah, Davinche pioneered R&G with tunes like "Leave Me Alone". Too often these attempts at Brit-Beyoncé fall short owing to a lack of grounding in songcraft and the studio art of mixing vocalists, and end up sounding slightly thin and shabby. So I prefer Davinche's instrumental efforts like the Dirty Canvas EP series. The quasi-soundtrack orchestration of "Stinger" – furring strings, decaying tones from a softly struck gong – are designed to swathe any MC who rhymes over it an aura of slightly harnessed majesty. Built out of similar pizzicato elements meshed to a beat like a clockwork contraption gone haywire, "Madness", I'd wager, drew inspiration from the pansara zone reached after one too many: racing thoughts, pounding heart, jangled nerves, the suspicion that you might just be losing your mind.

Grime is synonymous with East London, but other parts of the city are starting to get a look-in. Essentials, Davinche's crew, operate out of the South. This powerful sense of territoriality is integral to the concept of "Headquarters", which draws on the talents of a veritable battalion of MCs, some guests and some from Essentials' own barracks. At the MC chorus, a drill sergeant barks questions at the MC who's stepping up for his turn: "State your name, soldier", "State your location" (usually "East" or "South", sometimes a specific postal district), "Who you repen?" (usually a crew, like Essentials, NASTY, Aftershock, but sometimes just "myself"). Then the sergeant orders each recruit to get down: "Give me 16" – not press-ups, but 16 bars of rhymes. The amazing production seals the conceptual deal, the

chorus being accompanied by cello-like instrumentation that's been digitally contorted into an unearthly wraith-like whiny, or a cyberwolf howling at the moon.

LETHAL B FEATURING FUMIN, D DOUBLE E, NAPPA, JAMAKABI, NEMO, FLOW DAN, OZZI B, FORCER, DEKMO & HOT SHOT

POW (FORWARD)

RELENTLESS 12" 2004

Following a failed mainstream-bd album, More Fire looked all washed up in 2003, but Lethal B rebuilt their street rep from the ground up. In 2004, his "Forward" riddim became the scene's biggest anthem. Renamed "Pow" on account of its main vocal hook, it ultimately barged its way to the outskirts of the Top Ten, achieving Grime's highest chart placing since... well, "Di". The riddim is basic verging on crude, a madly grating loop that resembles an out of control carousel. "Pow", Lethal's chorus chant, evokes the fistcuffs of comic book superheroes. Matching the track's rowdy vibe (it was repeatedly banned in some clubs for inciting mayhem on the floor), a squadron of top MCs lay on the ultraviolence, the cartoon favour of which can be gleamed from Demon's immortal warning, "You don't wanna bring some beef/Bring some beef you'll lose some teeth."

JAMMER FEATURING WILLY

D DOUBLE E, KANO & DIRTY DOOGZ

DESTRUCTION REMIX

WHITE LABEL 12" 2004

D DOUBLE E & P-JAM

ANGER MANAGEMENT

OICE RECORDINGS 12" 2004

Like "Pow", "Destruction" is a rollercoaster of pugilistic noise and lyrical aggro, but Jammer's production is marginally more sophisticated, slicing 'n' dicing brassy fanfares (probably from blaxploitation movies) and filtering them to create a sort of surging yet-leashed effect, like the track is simmering with pent-up rage. The four scene-leading MCs rose to the occasion, from Willy's rifeled variations on "I know trouble but trouble says he don't know you", to Kano's quiantly Anglicised gangsta boast "From lamp post to lamp post, we run the road". But the star performance comes from D Double E. Sounding like he's battling multiple speed impediments, he expostulates glibal gouts of raw verbiage. "Splitting" is too decorous a word for his rhyme style; retching is closer. Witness Double's astonishing first six bars on "Destruction", a gargyle glibler closer to hieroglyphics than language, seemingly emanating from the same infernal zone Iggy Pop plumbled on "TV Eye". On Double's first solo single since "Birds in The Sky", rising producer PJam's snaking wooze of gaseous malice spurs one of the MC's most Tourette performances. Barely tethered to the beat's bar scheme, Double seems to be wading waist-deep through sonic sludge. He boasts of "sucking up MCs like a Hoover", an image possibly cued by the Mentasm-like masme unloosed by PJam.

TRIM

BOOGIEMAN

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2004

BRUZA

NOT CONVINCED

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2005

Like most dance producers, Grime beatmakers

TOP: TARGET
MIDDLE: RIKO
BOTTOM: TERROR DANJAH



typically invent a striking sound, then wear it out with endless market-milking iterations. Terror Danjah has often approached that dangerzone, but on "Boogeman", he shows how much scope for inventive arrangement remains in the "Creep Crawler" template. You can hear the cartoon-comical woo-woo ghostly touches beat on the instrumental version. "Haunted" (on Aftershock's *Roadweeper* EP), "Boogeman" itself is a showcase for rising star Tim, here howling his persona of scoffing imperturbability: "I'm not scared of the boogeman/I scare the boogeman."

On "Not Convinced", Danjah drags a whole new template that reveals the producer's roots in drum 'n' bass (the track's futuristic tingles vaguely recalls Foul Play's "Being With You" remix). Again, though, the MC makes it hard to focus on the oddism. Bruza incorporates British intonation and idiom: the not-flow of stilted English cadences becomes a new flow. It sounds "brutal and British", as Bruza puts it. As his name suggests, the MC has also perfected a hardman persona that feels authentically English rather than a gangsta fantasy based on Compton or Kingston. He exudes a laconic, steely menace redolent of bouncers.

"Not Convinced" extrapolates from this not-easily-impressed persona to create a typology of character in which the world is divided into the serious and the silly, the latter lacking the substance and conviction to give their words authority. Bruza addresses, and dresses down, a wensabe MC: "I'm not convinced/Since you've been spittin'/I haven't believed one word/Not one inch/Not even a millimetre/To me you sound like a silly speaker/Silly features in your style/You spit silly."

KANO FEATURING D DOUBLE E & DEMON RELOAD IT

667 RECORDS COLP 5005 (FORTHCOMING)

Circling back to "Bound 4 The Reload", the track "Reload it" celebrates the pirate radio and rave tradition of the DJ rewind, when the crowd holler their demand for the selector to wheel and come again. Until Grime, the trigger for rewords would be a killer sampled vocal lick, thrilling bass drop, or even just a mad breakbeat.

Nowadays, the MC being king, the crowd clamours to hear their favourite rhymes. "This is what it means when D1e reload it/That I'd been mean and he knows it," explains Kano, before listing the other top dog MCs who get ruff rewords (two of them, Double and Demon, guest on the track). "I get a reload purely for the flow," Kano preens, and you can see why as he glides with lethal panache between quicktime rapping and a leisurely, drawn out gait that seems to drag on the beat to slow it down. The track itself, which is co-produced by Kano and Diplo, is all shimmering excitement, pivoting around a spangly filtered riff that ascends and descends the same four notes, driven by a funky rampage of live-sounding drums and punctuated by horn samples, Beni G's scorching and orgasmic girl-moans.

The Did Skool breakbeat-like energy suggests an attempt to sell the notion of Grime as British HipHop, yet if Transatlantic crossover is the intent, that's subverted by the localised, Grime-reflexive lyric. "Reload it" encapsulates the conflicted impulses that fuel this scene: underground insularity versus an astrovert's hunger to engage with, and conquer, the whole wide world. □

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Iggy Poplar
Erith Dolphy
Lee Morrice
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Ning Nong 15

Mano With Wound
Shpetack Radio: Seven Sonic Structures From Unsur
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ess
The Sounds Of Disaster (Pescos/Hymns)
Enore Zaffari
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Org-Singer (Pigment)
Inevicaptale
All Watched Over By Machines Of Loving Grace
(Wichita)
Subtle
A New White (Lad)
Mirror
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Thrup-Bun Tillion Manifestations (self released)
Revolutions
Sechum/Mouse Of Sun (Warner Japan)
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The Bliste Sons
We Walk The Young Earth (Family Vineyard)
Dalek
Absence (Pescos)

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Squarepusher
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Ele
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Low
Songs For A Dead Pilot (Voxley)
Gene Clark
No Other (Deleas)
Left Bank
There's Gonna Be A Storm (Mercury)
Johney Cash
The Fabulous Johney Cash (Columbia)
Flux
Wency (Dele)
Glenn Freese
Lesson No 1 (Acute)
The Jimi Hendrix Experience
Axis: Bold As Love (MCA)
Sam Prekop
Sam Prekop (Thrill Jockey)
Augustus Pablo
Dubbing With The Don (Damian Recording)
Ripke Mullis
Consequences (Erasmi)
Tamemotto De Jerez
Sonidos Negros (Quipo/Hapeval)
Arthur Russell
Calling Out Of Context (Audiok)

The Office Ambience

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Brook
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Maqui Mariani
I Trust My Guitar, Etc. (Elastic Press/Apostrophe)
Animal Collective featuring **Wendy Burgen**
Prospect Hummer (Flat Cat)
Veritas
Black & Proud: The Soul Of The Black Panther Era
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Veritas
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Moskova
Invisible Force (Moskova/Imbalance)
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Complete Studio Recordings (Trade)
Sonic
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Tosh Ichijewagi
Opera From The Works Of Tadashi Yoko (Bridge)
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Veritas
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Sage Francis
A Healthy Dinosaur (Epiphany)
Autobahn
Unstated (Warp)
Veritas
Thorned Bullhorn: Rites From The Monasteries Of
Bhutan (Sob Ross)

Compiled by The Twister

Compiled by Jim Siegel, Ning Nong Radio, Tuesday
10pm EST on WZBC 90.3 FM, Boston, www.wzbc.org

Compiled by Audifono Musical, Barcelona
audifono_musical@yahoo.es

Compiled by The Wire Sound Systems

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email charts@thetwister.co.uk

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Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl



Evan Parker in birdland

**EVAN PARKER/JOHN COXON/
ASHLEY WALES**

EVAN PARKER WITH BIRDS
THREADER CD

**JOHN COXON/EVAN PARKER/
MARK SANDERS/ASHLEY WALES**
TRIO WITH INTERLUDES

MARK SANDERS
SWALLOW CHASE
THREADER CD

More than 40 years on since musicians from many different countries and backgrounds cut their ties with jazz and post-jazz indeterminacy in order to improvise music without structuring or rules, we still have to consider the implications of freedom. Secret codes of behaviour, clandestine strategies and hidden rules for technological acceptability have always lurked at the edges of the improv world. How free is free, what price freedom without construction and other questions whose heat has long dissipated in the cold night.

Also dissipated to some degree in recent years are the anxieties, as younger players have come onto the scene after major conflicts have been driven to a workable conclusion. Ashley Wales and John Coxon are good examples of players who refuse to recognise any incompatibility between composing, popular music forms, cliques and camps, age and hairstyle, electric instruments and sampling on the one hand, and free improvisation on the other. They are proactive curators who get their hands dirty in the business of playing, as well as in the business of business, and this means that when the experiment fails to ignite on stage, they stand to lose as much face as the musicians they invite. This, in my opinion, is a good thing.

These three releases, nicely packaged in pastel pink, green and blue card folders, each one embossed on the front with a gold animal, represent the small group and of their ambitions. Having taken part in one of their large group adventures, I feel it's a safer bet to work with quartets, trios, duos and

David Toop monitors a garrulous and eloquent dialogue between generations of improvisors that rekindles old questions about freedom and tradition

solos, though the social implications of improvising with large and motley crews will always be tempting. The influence of Evan Parker is subtle, not just musically, since all three are recorded at Gateway Studios, an inspiring live room in Kingston-Upon-Thames long favoured by Parker as a place which feels fantastic, sounds fantastic and documents the pleasure of the experience with great sensitivity.

I'll pass quickly over the Mark Edwards solo CD of drums and percussion. He is a player with a wonderfully light, swift touch, and the quality of recording gives me the sensation of crouching inside his drum kit, feeling the air of sticks as they fly like swallows over skin and cymbal, the sensual softness of fizzing metal, muted drubbing, snare scrape, gong hum. Yes, I've heard (something like) it before, but at the same time, this forward momentum over surfaces of haptic exactitude has seduced me.

Starting out sceptical is something to do with hearing an acoustic instrument beautifully recorded in a perfect live room. Nothing wrong with that; quite the opposite, but does it make the heart beat faster, and if it doesn't, what's wrong with us (or me)? From one point of view, it's the most exciting thing of all, given the current predominance of electronically generated and modulated sound sources. The quartet of Coxon, Wales, Parker and Edwards on *Trio With Interludes* sounds very fresh because it suggests an approach that might have been formed in the 1960s, if free improvisation had stuck close to Sun Ra, Larry Young and Miles Davis, rather than opting to be acoustic and European. Over Roland MKS 80 keyboard trills, a repeated bass note, cheesy Wurliizer trademark armands, gurgles, extrusions and grumbles, all sounding like small animals being rendered into food products. Parker on tenor saxophone blazes like a fire in a polyester factory.

The music is structured in the most obvious way: hectic rushing here and there, to and fro, followed by the interludes, which meander a little and dither among intriguing sonic mixtures, both acoustic, electronic and *Saturnian*, followed by further episodes of Velcro ripping, baby elephant walks and flying

sauces rock 'n' roll. It's all a little bit follow-my-leader - here's a thing, quick and slow, where's your thing? But as a session, which it is, the overwhelming impression is that everybody had a thoroughly good time. It's infectious, so demands to be shared.

Evan Parker With Birds is dedicated to Steve Lacy, who surely listened to a lot of birdsong in his life, and could indeed play with the strange unforced glamour and complexity of a songbird. Coxon and Wales provide the soundscapes, derived from bird vocalisations recorded by such past luminaries of the avian sound recording world as Jean C Roche and Eric Simms. Since Parker (on soprano and tenor) enters the aviary with much the same phrase as he used to gain purchase in the soundscapes of Basil Kirchin 35 years ago, comparisons with *Worlds Within Worlds* are inevitable. I'd suggest the results are more successful, if only because the interaction appears to be happening in real time and Parker has become a whole lot more experienced at inter-species encounters.

What is fascinating is the way in which he begins as a member of the human species, repeating phrases of exquisite musicality that don't quite gel with collective signalling from a different wavelength. As so often with Parker's playing, these introductory remarks, a form of convoluted, stereotypical address that weighs the air and measures the quality of the opposition, give way to deeper ruminations. I won't say that he grows feathers and a beak, or that his musical skin is definitely shed. Reed abandoned, the saxophone keys ascend, fluttering above a supernatural flock from the Hitchcock school of special effects. Later we hear distant church bells. Almost a John Major moment of warm beer and little old ladies riding bicycles over the village green, the combination is a happy reminder that change ringing has for centuries endured as indigenous tradition, a form of vernacular systems music, or generative sound art, played unselfconsciously by amateurs and despite the ecclesiastical point of origin, a form of music so peculiarly inhuman as to fit the brief to perfection. □

Soundcheck

programmes are re-evoked, memories of dragging nasty old clockwork toys from the attic.

"Landscape" and "Cluster At Own Eerie" are like blurry, yellowed photographs of old semi-rural landscapes, practically crumbling on inspect. The ancient wallpaper, these deliberately aged and distressed sounds are hardly unprecedented – William Basinski and Third Eye Foundation spring immediately to mind, as does some of

Deathprod's recent work. What really distinguishes *Fi* is that I've never heard this sort of thing done better. More than merely demonstrate a taste, *Bono* follows beautifully through on it. There's a nostalgia at work in these pieces but of the abstract rather than easy variety. *Fi* prompts you to contemplate the very idea of the semi-forgotten/semi-remembered, the way all things eventually dissolve into the liquid half-life of the subconscious.

BIRD SHOW GREEN INFENNO

KRANKY CD
BY MARK MASTERS

Ben Vida is a multi-instrumentalist for numerous Chicago-based groups, but he is best known for his work in the hypnotic minimalist quartet *Town & Country*. Green Infenno is his second solo album (following 1999's *Aph*), though it's creditless to Bird Show, a duo Vida formed with *Town & Country* colleague Lou Payne after he recorded the pieces here. A collection of carefully constructed drones and ambiances, Green Infenno is similar to *Town & Country* in its studied approach, but more aggressive in its use of volume and pitch, and more interested in tribal rhythms and field recorded sounds. Vida has a good ear for consistency and repetition. Wherever he could take a quick turn or sharp leap, he stays put, letting his sounds develop without forcing them into patterns.

Green Infenno begins benignly, with the waxy screech of "All Attention Part #1" and the flat marriage of gong-like bells and high-moored vocals in "Mind Light". But things accelerate rapidly during the album's tale track, a rolling drone filled with small bits of percussion and a beat that mimics the clucking of hatchlings on a coldstone stove. From there, Vida goes on a collage of sounds through his dense dream-lands. "Always/Never Sleep Part #1" evokes other *Kovach* slowcore like Labradford, Local and, most recently, the massaging drins of Greg Davis's *Somnia*. The gurgling clicks of "Raccoons" are astonishingly evocative, while "Morning/Evening"

lays Tony Conrad-esque violin beneath Vida's beauty singing. Most stunning is the closing "All Attention Part #2 (Down Of The Dead)". Using field recordings, rhythmic bells and high-toned whines, the track echoes Terry Riley's escalating cycles and Angus MacLise's outsider trances, ending with a primal drone that unites Vida's obsessions – electronic hum, acoustic ambience and woozy buzz – into one massive sound.

BLACK BONED ANGEL SUPERCLOUSE

BURN BURN CD
BY JIM HARNES

Named after a Godfather song, Black Boned Angel is the work of the unstoppable Campbell Kneale, best known for his sustained electric bannants as Birchville Cat Motel. For Black Boned Angel, Kneale offers his own interpretation of the detuned Metal riff by slumping into the same comatose subharmonic stator embraced by Metal method actors Surrin Ojij and Earth.

Superclosure is his first production as Black Boned Angel, although his dopamine riffs and growling amplifier rumbles essentially pick up where the last Birchville Cat Motel album *City Vampires* left off. Where that BCM album enjoyed a noticeable jump from post-Digaurum bowed symbol drumming into crushing heaviness, Superclosure finds Kneale speeding headfirst in Earth/Surrin Ojij witchy, as he almost elegantly crawls through a tarpit of necropolis riffs permanently caught in blasted low-end distortion and feedback. About 25 minutes into the album, drums begin to punctuate Kneale's drags and accentuate the deliberately slow crowd progressions. An *ar* and *sen* guitar doubles up on the snarled riffs providing a black sunburst of paranoia, claustrophobia and transcendence all wrapped up in one drug-addled package. The final entry furthers the album's malcontent with an homage to Swans' "Raping A Slave" – era-cinder block rhythms and monstrous earthquake riffs. While the influences that went into Superclosure can be a bit obvious, Campbell Kneale hummers every sound within a devastatingly effective drizzle that releases this album to equal that of his heroes.

THE BOOKS LOST AND SAFE

CD
BY ROB YOUNG

During the latter half of his 300 year history, America has been as much about city-building as

range-riding. Yet its leaders and spokesmen often seem to simplify its plurality of voices to a set of reductive ideas and principles of nationhood. The current venue for the artifice among certain American underground musicians (Jack Rose, Alvin Family, Espers, Cumbuck Co. et al), reknitting Country hillbilly and folk terrain in some kind of survivalist flight to the hills, is perhaps a side effect of that tendency. The Books (NY State duo Nick Zimmuto/Wilschneider and Paul Delong) use many similar signifiers, sampling whistles, knives and acoustic guitars, and singing in a debilitated Simon & Garfunkel baritone. But Lost And Safe's fractured and splintered collage offers a vision of an America closer from its originating methods of statehood, unable to address itself in a public language.

This decidedly Hesseite songcraft has a range of ancestors, including Talking Heads, Sparks and David Grubbs, but three albums along, the Books are nailing down a distinctive soundworld of their own, rivalled only by Matmos (another group fascinated with deconstructing the serology of the Wild West), Dr "Smells Like Catent", Delong's cello is doped up and shuffled into busy clenching rhythmic cells muddled from skees, guitars, thumb piano and trinkle vocals.

The scarpety feel is accentuated by the unattributed found voices and texts, pasted like into forward sounds, or just used wholesale, as in "Vector", an outside broadcast in which Salvador Dali can be heard dawdling his audience, including gentlemen of the press. A self-conscious resistance to 'closure' can become an irritating bit – sentences end in "yuh" and "it's just not as, yeah...". The Books are America's new survivalists – intellectual and urban, hiding out in their low-rise apartments, waiting for the storm to blow over.

MATTHEW BURTNER METASAXOPHONE COLOSSUS

INDICA CD
BY BRIAN MARLEY

The title of Matthew Burtner's latest CD bravely ups the ante on Senny Ralston's 1956 album *Saxophone Colossus*. But this isn't a jazz outing and saxophony isn't quite the point. Burtner extends the sonic potential of his saxophones by using embedded microphones and MIDI processing. Computer-generated sound and an electric feedback system can be used and controlled from the metasaxophone while the standard saxophone sound is retained. Almost all of the material on *Metasaxophone Colossus*

is made by Burtner, though "Si Thomas Phase" samples Rollins and drummer Max Roach playing one of Rollins's most famous compositions, "Si Thomas". These samplings are run through Burtner's computer polyrhythmic and the material is multiplied, stretched, layered and phased in a process akin to panderphoresis. All other tracks on the CD feature "live" (single take, presumably) performances by Burtner, using various saxophones and software. "Si Morpho-Si" recreates what he calls a hybrid computer instrument, as saxophone saxophone appears as soft while simultaneously mimicking a Tibetan singing power bowl. Burtner's wild power bowl does things a power bowl wouldn't normally do, and his unadorned saxophone roughly maps the multophonics of which Evan Parker is the most exciting cartographer. The remaining five tracks offer permutations on a theme of sax-triggered electronics, of which the most interesting are "Hosegate 67" and "Delta 1", the former for computer metasaxophone, the latter for electric feedback saxophone and polyrhythm. The pulsed figures of "Hosegate 67" dissolve into electronic clouds while a tenor saxophone rather self-consciously approximates solo free improvisation. "Delta 1" is all noise and quasi-guitar fury (think Hendrix at Woodstock performing "The Star-Spangled Banner"). There are intriguing moments on *Metasaxophone Colossus*, but as an instrumentalist and a composer Burtner is often hampered rather than helped by his computer.

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS B-SIDES AND RARITIES

MUTE XXXCD

BY LOUISE GRAY

The further Nick Cave moves from his songwriting beginnings, the more closely he returns to them. It's now 21 years since the Bad Seeds emerged from the wreckage of The Birthday Party, the poetic, catastrophic Melbourne punk group that first brought Cave and Mick Harvey to London, and this triple CD captures this contrary motion. It's easy to forget how when faced with the elegance and economy of Cave's more recent albums – certainly since 1995's *The Boatman Call* – how impracticalist both The Birthday Party and, in their early years, The Bad Seeds were within a chosen framework, as one of the pleasures of this album that its 56 songs, taken from flipides, flexides, outtakes and unreleased tracks, demonstrate how that remains the same. Improvisation, in this instance, doesn't mean

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Nurse With Wound/CHRISTUS "ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 1" LP/CD

The New York City Outcasts drummer, these go to a violent and long overdue marriage. Their consummation has produced an explosive performance, combining a homophobic hybrid between Sadoism for Christ and Jesus and Jim's previous Dismay/Tamper.

Nurse With Wound/CYCLOPS "ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 2" LP/CD

On the other hand, NWW's Cyclops and Jim's husband's Cyclops chose to mine the NWW projects into a deeply and madly complex, personal, and even a touch sweet and odd and crash against your speakers in a noisy, electric acoustic mix.

Nurse With Wound/BLAISE (Ext J) "ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 3" LP/CD

As the first finger in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 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11 Fri Glasgow City Theatre

12 Sat Manchester Sage Theatre

13 Wed Glasgow Grand Old Oxy

14 Thu Manchester Academy 2

ALASDAR ROBERTS

13 Wed Cambridge The Portico

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the virtuosic parts of songs like "The Mercy Seat", but a commitment to variation in a more traditional sense. Indeed, "The Mercy Seat" is here re-rendered with the solemn pace that has characterized its live performance for some years, and when Coe does do improv on "That's What Jazz Is To Me", a spirit of spontaneity. So an acoustic version of "Desert" is no shed of all its mundaneness as it segues into a tambourine spritzed "Oh, Happy Day", while "City Of Refuge" becomes oddly jaunty with a call-and-response section that does homage to Billie Holiday's 1928 original.

These recordings are also a history of the semi-permeable edge of The Bad Seeds. Guitarist Blue Jeans, the Enslaved Newburyton freeman and founding Seed, whose rasping backing vocals can be heard on virtually all but the last few songs; his eventual replacement, James Johnston from Gallon Drunk, first enters in 1996, on a robust version of the traditional murder ballad "Knoweille Girl". More subtly, it's the arrival of Dirty Three violinist Warren Ellis that strikes. His velle, eternally scowling then dragging on "Time Jesus Transcendent: E. Non Reverentum" (a hidden track on a soundtrack inspired by The X-Files TV series) and "The Yellow Garden" (a live hymn of its making).

There are, unsurprisingly, great contrasts in material and quality. There's no point in comparing Coe's take on Leonard Cohen's "Tower Of Song" (Bad Seeds & The Camps and Doves) with the superb originals — "Grief Come Riding", "Shoot Me Down" — from *No More Shall We Part* and *Nocturne*. It's enough just to know these two extremes exist in the same body of work. One of the real delights is the untold story of how Kyle Minogue was once (like Björk) wild, kind of the version of "Where The Wild Roses Grow" included here was made as a guide track for Minogue. Coe sings out his murderous intent, while Björk takes on the vocals of the celtic maiden, soon to be done to death. How befelice Björk is in this persona is one thing, its quite another to learn that Minogue bared her subsequent performance on her arch and edgy perverse recording.

COOPER-MOORE & ASSIF TSAHAR TELLS UNTOLD HOPSCOTCH CD

BY ANON HAMILTON

Cooper-Moore lives in New York but was born in 1946 in the Blue Ridge Mountains — "into segregated Virginia to an intact African-American family", he writes. Perhaps best known as a pianist, he makes his living mostly by writing off-Broadway musicals and playing for dance companies. A combative figure with an intense involvement in the improvisational process, I'm ashamed to say I'd had him down as one of the music's primitivists. This is a complete misconception, as is clear from *Tells Untold*, recorded with regular partner, saxophonist Assif Tshahar, on the latter's excellent Hopscotch label. Tshahar was born in Tel Aviv in 1969 and moved to New York in 1990, working with such Cecil Taylor, William Parker and Mat Mason.

The atmospheric soundworld of *Tells Untold* is Sub-Saharan Africa. The track listing doesn't include instrumentation, but these are my guesses. On "The Light", ashtray baze against Tshahar's plangent bass clarinet explorations,

while the annotated, multitracked "Inbes Gathering" features fute and kora-like harp, eerie, feline-sounding mouth-bow and bell.

"Drackles" has the seething guitar sounds of asex dolly-to against keening tenor sax from Tshahar, while on "The Hawk" — with cries and calls from baze clarinet, Cooper-Moore turns to tuned drums. On the long and plangent title track, Tshahar waves the horn line-up with muzzur, a type of oboe, while Cooper-Moore plays fute and shafar — originally an instrument made from a ram's or bear's horn. "Deviations" and "Another World Another Time", for synth and the lowest registers of the dolly-bow, are nightmarish, dystopian departures from the African theme. A rich, deep offering from two master improvisers.

DI SPOOKY VS DAVE LOMBARDO DRUMS OF DEATH

THRISTY KAR CD

BY PHIL FREDMAN

Once again, Di Spooky has a great idea that fails to become a good album. Dave Lombardo, a member in good standing of both Slayer and Fear Factory, provides many if not most of the drum sounds here. Spooky and producer Jack Bengers of Most Best Menstru manipulate said beats and add other stuff (screaming, samples and keyboard squiggles) around them. Chuck O and Vernon Reid supply vocals and guitar respectively on a couple of tracks each. Does that litany of 90s names sound like a classic case of "too many cooks" to you? All Drums Of Death's sonic terror moves are from the mid-90s and sound vaguely embarrassing now.

Chuck O reworks three old PE tracks — "B-Side Wine Again", "Public Enemy No 1" and "Brothers Gonna Work It Out" — and sounds exhausted and a little resentful that he's reduced to this kind of tokenism/cameo status. In the album's most egregious offense, Lombardo's drums are mixed like Di Shadow beats, set live avalanches in hell the way they should. Why hire Dave Lombardo if you're going to make him sound like just anybody? The only track really worth hearing is the one that delves on the premise of the title — "Bionic Zanzibar", which is a Spooky. Lombardo goes for tumblers and drums. The rest is the work of men when history has left behind.

AXEL DÖRNER DIE ENTAUSCHUNG

CROUION MUSIC LP

BY BEN WATSON

There has been so much neo-conservative bop, retro bop, postmodern bop, downtown bop and downright aco bop on CD, something extra is obviously required. By pressing their music onto two sides of heavy vinyl and providing a dodec collage for the cover (the group play against a dystopia of horror film stills, Bauhaus huntsmen, Olympian athletes, plastic sewered from a sushi seat, with track details in optically distressed lettering like something printed in a back street in Bucharest or Bombay), the Axel Dörner Quartet certainly make their product look different. The recording is appropriate too, evoking the raw, spacious, uncompressed sound of Blue Note and BPG releases. First said, two very omissions — the lack of detail on the label and no title on the spine — indicate a digital age unversed in LP usage.

Axel Dörner has made a name for himself

playing lowcase electronics and reductionist improv, but, like many able instrumentalists, also has an abiding love for jazz. Like John Zorn in his Masada quartet, Özer Zorn thrives thoroughly at home in two bop. And (again like Zorn) the fact that he's also played in open contexts seems to provide a special zig. With Rudl Moll on bass clarinet, Eric Oulby is very much in the air, especially the two All The Five Spot Lps. Jan Roder plays baze and Ulf Arnesen plays drums. The tunes are all originals. Though these pastiche the bop era, they ignore the musicians in a special way. Certainly, the vibe is looser and more tangy than the rather austere mid CD set of Monk tunes (Monk's Casano, Intakt) which this quartet recorded in June 2003 and February 2004 in Berlin with pianist Alexander Von Schlippenbach.

What you now want from Crouion Music is Die Enttäuschung Vol 2, with the quartet using a similar set-up, but playing free. That might reveal the material connectives, in terms of overall metres and architectures, that exist between the best of improv and electronics, and the works of Mingus, Delphy and Monk.

MATT ELLIOTT DRINKING SONGS

NOIADALLEURS CD

BY BEN HOLLINGS

Finger 24 hour bringing, raucous antisocial behaviour, even the gin-soaked balladry of The Band Of Holy Joy or the likes of Easy E, The Beasties Baze and Scheezy D singing the praises of their favourite bar. Matt Elliott emerges shyly from the shadows of his Third Eye Foundation alias to celebrate the drowning of sorrows rather than the exuberant passing away of our leisure hours. Intropective and alone, bawling in the fumes of some neglected cellar, his drinking songs withdraw themselves not simply from polite society but from all society. How else can one dream or contemplate what might have been?

Opener "Cry Buddy" has a woezy charm. Evenly paced and alive with the shrumming of acoustic guitars, it sets the mood for what is to come. Evoking the grooves and ruminations of a bygone age, one given sick and embelished by fantasies, "Trying To Explain", "The Guilty Party" and "What's Wrong" would all seem to be taking place in the world leeching on the edge of some great fall or cataclysm. "What The Fuck Am I Doing On This Battlefield?" and "A Waste Of Blood" are both moments of rude awakening. As a coda and extended finale, the 20 minute "The Mind We Messed" sees Elliott returning to the worship and hyperbolicities baze of his Third Eye Foundation recordings. Overall, however, Drinking Songs remains a work to be listened to with eyes closed — it's about the only way you can keep the room from spinning.

FAST 'N' BULBOUS: THE CAPTAIN BEEFHEART PROJECT

POOR CHOP BLUE AROUND THE RING

THE RING

COUNDFORM CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Guitarist Gary Lucas, who worked with Captain Beefheart during his early 80s Joe Cream For Cow period, is centre of attraction for this Beefheart covers project. Bass, drums and four

piece brass section set up a muscular, R&B-inflected context for his grinding and aching bottleneck excursions. "Evening Bell" is the guitarist alone, sounding in a rush to shake up the effervescent, bubbling phrases, as if Lucas is a formula one driver and his ace a mugshot of champagne. Beethorn and champagne? Some mistake surely...

On Lucas like "Pacheco Prints," "When It Blows Its Stars" and "Pacheco Cadaver," First W' Bulbous are full-bodied and sound like they're having fun. The problem being that fun maybe wasn't what The Magic Band were about; all those years ago like "Pacheco Cadaver" from 1968, the song on which Beethorn actually says, "First W' bulbous, got me?" in that menacing yet labious voice. Here's the verse: "When she wears her beleva then she begin to dance/All the pachecos start witholding hands." Like Mike Skinner's *The Streets*, this is a poetry and music miscommunication, stretched from the backtracks and pumped full of agency. Like some Mayan Desert Stovinsky, Beethorn's ailed blues groove to the control freakery of a classical composer — in Frank Zappa's production, it's compelling, inevitable music, but not especially zany or fun.

Lucas's group dispartes with the lyrics and let the times take centre stage in him: player Philip Johnston's arrangements. Up to a point this works, but the desperate seriousness of the original is replaced by good humour and goofing. Joe Fiedler plays a raw trombone, but we never feel the full power of a disciplined horn section. The tuning is a test of control and the production perfunctory. At least they sent me back to Trout Mask Replicas, an album I've never and never play.

BILL FAY GROUP TOMORROW TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

DURING CD
BY MIKE DARNES

The recent rediscovery of this enigmatic musical figure, chronicled in Rob Young's excellent article in the *Wire* 253 amounts to more than the typical presentation of records as multi-archaeological exhibits. His previously unissued albums, recorded between 1978 and 1981, contains some exceptional music, but what also lingers in the mind is Bill Fay's philosophy of music making, which questions our very notions of creativity.

These are of who have been involved in failed or shelved projects can take heart in his totally egoless approach to the role of a musician and composer as essentially someone who listens and takes down what he hears. For someone who has had little material released, he seems, at least on the surface, content to continue producing music even though it might never be heard. If financial or business structures silence his output, for Fay, the creative process is an end in itself, and at least the actual music has been saved.

There's an appealing purity of concept in this semi-covert process, but more appealing still is Fay's talent. *Tomorrow Tomorrow* and *Tomorrow* features dense and finished studio recordings of songs that yield their secrets slowly but steadily. The opener, "Swage Stairway", with Gary Smith playing some exquisite tremolo guitar motifs, sets the tone of spiritual yearning

and melancholy that runs through the album. There's often a feeling that these short pieces hint at some greater architecture outside themselves.

Fay is a 'proper' songwriter, every bit as skilled in his craftsmanship as, say, Jimmy Webb and Harry Nilsson, but with a peculiar Englishness and a singular take on song structure. "Planet Earth Daytime" begins with his single characteristic fast song moves through a number of episodes, including a possibly-forthcoming monologue hinting at disaster and a sun-filled coda. "Cosmic Bower" has a swooning, beautiful melody and the most bizarre allegorical lyrics, with Real Gallop's bees reeking out of the mix and Bill Stratton's drums skittering in syncope.

It's appropriate that the album is credited to The Bill Fay Group, for it is far more substantial than the ace songwriter supported by pig-and-play session musos. They are all deeply empathetic with Fay's material. On "Life", the study tune is buffeted by playing borking on the fretboard, with a searing solo by Smith. It's not so much that Fay's music was running against the grain of similar piano-led material; it's more a question of why more people didn't venture down a similar route.

FIGURE WHEN THE ALPHABET HIDES IN YOUR MOUTH

STATIC SIGNALS CD
BY KEITH MOUNIE

An ambitious release, this, from Bronx Ensemble alumnus Brennan Haugness. A kind of psychological one-man opera, it explores areas of the protagonist's fractured psyche through a number of inventive but more often baffling means. A text somewhere between prose poetry and theatre script is printed in the CD insert, designed to be followed as the disc plays. Unfortunately, the piece's frequent darkness and ultimate impenetrability renders it something of a *Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* of avant electronics.

There is much to enjoy in the musical backdrops, with their layered doses of samples and manipulated guitar abstractions. Skillful plating of sounds produces a sense of monumental depth to the album's 18 minute centrepiece "The 'Dear' Prisoner", thematically, however, Figure is on shakier ground. His 'libretto' deals (I think) with issues of historical, social and sexual identity, but it's an obscure piece of writing to say the least. One problem is Figure's delivery of the text, which aims to elucidate the content by means of a heightened Scott Walker-like diction but sounds more like a classical baritone emerging from a ten year coma with chronic toothache. More troublesome still is how the lack of any coherent narrative structure — not in itself a bad thing — here results in a lack of tension and dynamics, making *When The Alphabet* a very tough 70 minutes to endure.

At times Figure's pretensions reek and rival the hysterical confessions of Nicki's Jamie Stewart, with a concomitant sense that baring behind some Red Auerbach Devotions is an artist of originality and commitment. This is a brave attempt at creating a DIY Gesamtkunstwerk, miserably at odds with fashionable hyper-minimalist practices, and for that Figure should be applauded.

DREDD FOOLE A LONG, LOSING BATTLE WITH ELOQUENCE AND INTIMACY

ECSTATIC YOD LP
BY DAVID KIRKMAN

Much as picking apart the title might suggest, Dredd Foole aka Dan Irton's fourth solo album is based around a series of folk-punk nuggets that combine modes of personal revelation with a demolition approach to syntax and a commitment to wakening the buried fire of vocal, narrative and lyrical constraints in much the same way as Bob Dylan and Tim Buckley did.

Irton's career goes back to the dusk of folk-punk in the mid-80s with his group Love's Signs. Denounced, but it wasn't until the early 90s that he first began a hole in the Boston rock scene as the leader of Dredd Foole And The Din, a group that at various points featured players drawn from the ranks of Mission Of Burma and Volcano Suns. The Din drew much of their power from an internal dialectic that vacillated between a commitment to the structural tenets of hardcore and Irton's own vision of a free rock music inspired by the ecstasies of late period Coltrane. As such, they combined ferocious rock dynamics with the kind of wild emotional abandon that was anathema to the more muscle-bound practitioners.

After The Din's implosion in the late 80s, Irton dropped off the map, resurfacing briefly in 1996 with the apocryphal *Quest Of Reno*, a set of improvised folk that drew comparisons to Steeleye-Ned Buckley, with electric slide guitar. Dr. Ewerd Yiji, aka Ed Yonjan, cast as his Lie Understood. On its initial release, in *Quest Of Reno* seemed to sink like a stone but its influence has slowly percolated through the underground, to the point that many of the players in America's free folk scene now hail it as a founding document. Creatively revitalised, Irton set to work with fellow spirits Matthew Valentine and Erika Elder in 2004, releasing two acid-drenched solo albums on the duo's own CD-R imprint, Child Of Microtones, as well as a new Din recording for Ecstatic Yod, featuring members of Pitt, Thurston Moore and drummer Chris Corsano.

A Long, Losing Battle With Eloquence And Intimacy is his first completely solo set, just Irton and his acoustic guitar, mostly recorded live in one take. Much like the songs of Lou Reed, his compositions are propelled by Stephenie and Lusa, rhythmic players in tender psychodramas that centre on the tiniest gulfs in communication. Combined with his classic, strung-down guitar parts, it brings to mind the secret tradition of post-Reed balladry of the likes of the late Peter Laughner, ex-Electric Eel Brian McMahon and Simply Saucer's Edgar Bress. Although Irton doesn't get quite as out as he does on his CDW work, there are flashes of associative vocal poetry all the way through the disc, peaking with the closer, "A Feeble Light", where he leaps from the closing chords into a tag of uncompromised epigrammatic trances and persnickish clarity. It's beautiful.

SAGE FRANCIS A HEALTHY DISTRUST

ETERNAL CD
BY ANNE HILDE NESEET

Paul Francis started his musical journey at eight years old, hunched down in his closet, clutching

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DAVE BUDHYKAR
WORKS
FOR THE
PLANET
SCHLEIFER-TECHER

a tape recorder and rapping his lungs dry. Seeing Chuck D live on the mic was epiphany enough to seal this kid's future. His debut came in 2002, at 24 years old, on Anticon Records — that Bay Area breeding ground of quick thinking, raw hating and fast talking. Sex Francis added doom preaching to the agenda.

A Healthy Destruct follows last year's *A Healthy Destruct*, Francis's vehicle for pouring all his fist hate" poems all over the ship with succumb machine gun delivery. Live back then he resembled a bomb-bulking survivalist, draped in the stars and stripes, spitting head, veins bulging, eyes popping, showed at state abuses of authority, gun culture, neurophobia, religion and advertising with the unrestrained force of a Southern sect leader.

A Healthy Destruct follows in the same vein, Francis's eloquent anger gives a similar gleeful satisfaction to, say, witnessing BBC2's *Newsnight* anchorman Jeremy Paxman barking the same question 17 times at a squirming politician. The record makes you minimize in Francis's enlisting, and the effect is one of cathartic rather than "exhaustion. There are occasional 'mellow moments' — "Sex Lion" sees the Sage in an unlikely collaboration with Louisville troubadour Will Dielman, an excellent amalgam of the two voices, one misanthropic, one aggressive. On the last track he loads for the old country, with his Johnny Cash tribute, "Iah Don't Let Johnny": "Iah don't let Johnny Cash/We had a date with death/It was a slow train coming/And we all have a train to catch."

KEITH FULLERTON WHITMAN
& GREG DAVIS
YEARLONG
CAMPARK CD

BY MARG MASTERS

BETWEEN DECEMBER 2001 and November 2002, Keith Fullerton Whitman and Greg Davis toured together through America, Europe and Japan. Most nights, each would perform solo, then follow with a short set of duo improvisations. More than 18 hours of recordings resulted, and two years of selecting and editing have produced the 45 minute *Yearlong*, whose 13 tracks are named after their respective locations and dates.

The music here is wide-ranging and unpredictable, utilizing the duo's common tools — small sounds, warm drones, undeniable sources and deft use of space and silence — to forge something more abstract than their solo works. Constantly conversing, Whitman and Davis mirror and shadow one another, passing their sounds back and forth like batons. At Cologne's Kettler Gallery, a rhythmic pluck dries a series of scrapes, while a live radio session at New York's WNYU turns echoing bells and high bips into something like a shorthand transmission of a Buddhist ceremony. Other tracks similarly mix primary sounds into a swirl of colours — at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio in New York, steel-tone dots sail through sandy rattles like a surgical knife cutting through fur, while at the Bottoms of the Hill in San Francisco, a flat rumble is stretched into peaks by sheets of static noise. While most of *Yearlong* juxtaposes intricate, individual sounds, the album's final two tracks are solid, hypnotic drones. At NYC's Kitting Factory, a meditative chord organ slowly builds into a rife-high hum; at Holland's Impact Festival, soft, rippling layers smother what sounds

like a marching band stomping along a train track. It's hard to locate Whitman or Davis individually inside *Yearlong*'s intoxicating sounds, but that's partially the point. The pair's inspired collaborations have gifted their separate visions into a distinctive third eye.

THE GASMAN
THE GRAND ELECTRIC PALACE
OF VARIETY
PLANET MU MIXCD

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

Chris Reeves's latest release for Planet Mu is, even in its weaker moments, unfailingly entertaining. The tropes introduced by The Aphex Twin through the 90s, which Reeves is unabashed to admit inform his work, are farcopic recipes for a solid listening experience — the breathy, helium synth stabs and sizzling filigree of drums that characterize The Aphex Twin's billowing rave odysseys are powerfully seductive. Indeed there's nothing wrong with working within someone else's stylistic parameters; the result can stand or fall on its own merits regardless. Originally, as Simon Reynolds has argued, can be a greatly overrated quality in music.

Still there is much that distinguishes the Gasmann from his mentors. Most obviously his music doesn't have the forbidding sheen of that of Aphex or Mike Rodden. Reeves opts for a rough-edged approximation full of homemade charm. Often sampling speeds of classical music from reed-to-reed, he'll transform typically classical sonic gestures into their counterparts in the lexicon of rave music. For instance on "Modium", where a few scratches of choral music are finger-triggered into an "Arktone fantasie or an "Eridge", where mournful cello piano warps are set amid drill 'r' bass edginess. "Muzzle" is exquisite, rotting wailing clicks take the drum's role in the foreground while the melody hovers curmudgeonly on the track's horizon. Timbral invention is also well large in "Dodgem" with its impressive resonant baseline. However too many tracks are cut from the same cloth and at times in Ambient mode things drag.

GOING DOWN!
GOTTA CRASH ON YOU!
TINYTONE CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

SINCE *Take A Deep Breath*, Going Down!'s first release for the Dutch label TinyTone in 2002, Steven Kerpman has left the group. His replacement is Matsutaoka Sami Kazushi, who plays bass trombone, electronic effects, loops and reeds. He joins founding members Henk Spies (bass and soprano saxophones, electronic effects, loops, Casio SA-10 and drum computer) and Nian Lamlailai (bassline and auto saxophones, electronic effects and synthesizer) who, between them, composed all of the material for the pun-riddled *Gotta Crash On You!*

All three members contribute vocals, such as the spoof rap on "New Hair", the fumed spoken interludes and crooning on "The Bump" and the Dave/Who-influenced absconded pop-punk track "Mute of New Hair". It's funny they play it perfectly straight, so, the punning, boogie beatlines sax riffs that underpin some of the purely instrumental passages, especially when Kazushi and Spies are playing their horns, are strangely reminiscent of The World Saxophone Quartet but with added electronics. Essentially, though, this is

an off-the-wall venture having much in common with some of the downtown NYC groups led by Steven Bernstein, such as Sex Mob, or, nearer to home, the Casuone Trio. On "A Lip Supreme", the four-note stepwise figure in the bass which ballads "Acknowledgement" on John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* is sandwiched between American public information warnings about the evils of marijuana. Gotta Crash On You! is, purely, why we put together and adverbially entertaining. If they just ease off on the diabolical puns.

GÉRARD GRISEY
LE NOIR DE L'ETOILE
ACCORD CDMARTIN MATALON
LE SCORPION
ACCORD CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

In regenerating musical language, composes such as Xenakis and Radulescu looked for inspiration to ancient cosmologies. In *Le Noir De L'Etoile* (The Black Of The Star), Gérard Grisey turned to the ancient connection between music and cosmology. The music of the spheres was meant to be inaudible, but through the techniques of radio astronomy the French composer, teaching in 1985 in Berkeley, was able to translate the sounds of pulsars. He decided to integrate them in a composition as points of reference, their frequencies used to set tempos, and indeed the precise time of performances.

Grisey (1946-88) studied with Messiaen and Dutilleul, founding the Spectacla group Ultramarine with Iratani Musil and others in 1973. However, since *Le Noir De L'Etoile* is for percussion, Spectacla's concerns with harmonic analysis aren't paramount. Grisey decided on "just skins and metal" — no keyboards — because like the pulsars, they are "primitively and replaceable". Pulsars are incredibly dense, rapidly spinning stars less than 20 km across, famed when a violently exploding supergiant collapses inward. With each rotation, intense beams of radiation from the pulsar's magnetic poles sweep past the Earth, and ground-based telescopes detect an evenly spaced series of radio wave pulses.

The performers here are Les Percussiones De Strasbourg, still the leading percussion ensemble on this planet, and they show what echoes Grisey draws from comparatively limited resources. After the spoken presentation, the first movement opens with scarcely audible tuning on a bass tympanum, counterpointed by increasingly rapid bursts of metallic percussion. There aren't too many non-standard sounds of the kind free improvisers draw on, but the entry of the staccato bursts of Pulsar Vela is an extraordinary moment, making Grisey's intention vividly clear: this is exploitation of space in two senses — sounds come from deep space and are engaged to use performance space in the way Stockhausen advocated, as the superb live recording shows.

In contrast to the macrochordic concentration of Grisey's composition, Martin Matalon's *The Scorpion*, also performed by the Strasbourg ensemble, is a polyrhythmic and aural effluence. The Argentine composer, born in 1958 and associated in the last decade with IRCAM, uses full percussion including members and vibraphones, two pianos and live electronics in his music from 2002 for Luis Buñuel's film *El Cae D'Or*. This is his third Buñuel score — *Las Siete Vidas De*

Un Gato (The Seven Lives Of A Cat) appeared on his previous *Accord disc*. The *Scorpion* beautifully integrates electronic and acoustic resources in a very enjoyable score, even if it doesn't reach for Disney's passionate intensity.

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH HATFIELD CHOICE: ARCHIVE RECORDINGS 1973-1975 VOLUME 1

BY BEN WATSON

Hatfield And The North were two of a subgenre still hurting because it was wiped off the map by punk. In his knees, Jonathan Cox (whose novel *The Rotators* Cox And Lippin was named after the Hatfield's second album for Virgin) points out that punk didn't actually destroy the real rock dinosaurs. Pink Floyd And Led Zepplin went from strength to strength. What got sidelined was the alternative rock tradition of Sex Machine, Ely, Matching Male and Delivery: the unassuming, unpretentious yet determinedly imitative and thickly musically named Canterbury Rock. Histories which stuff everything post-punk and musically ambitious into a voluminous box called Prog rock do groups like Hatfield And The North a disservice. The Hatfield's critique of the music commercialism of Floyd, ELP and Yes was just as sharp as Malcolm McLaren's, and possibly more musically objective.

In a Techno-futurist economy dominated by retarded social realism, all creative endeavor is stifled by struggles over received wisdom. The Hatfield's had a unique take on a straight musical knowledge. The way they saw it, The Shadows, Beatles, John Mayall and Hendrix had demonstrated the undeniable power of various 'simple' harmonic intervals onto the reiffs been sufficiently amplified (just listen to the title on "Amsterdam 11/19" and "Ethanol Nurse" here). However, the Hatfield's didn't see such technicality as a mere platform for sexual bravado or lesbian statement. They combined within sequences and group improvisations which allowed them to think musically about this heavy musically generic — and to apply their considerable education. This is of course what sex is meant to do with blues and funk impulses, but what makes the Hatfield's convincing is that they're not attempting to sound like anyone else — Black, American or older. Their self-deprecating humor indicates a quiet confidence in their undiscovered success: the strong ego posited by Herbert Marcuse as the only defence against the culture industry's depredations.

Today, the point of reference for bassist Richard Sinden's delightful waltz would be Robert Wyatt, but the Hatfield's lack Wyatt's pop sensibility. Like all authentic music-instrumentalists (punk boasts a couple of these too, namely Johnny Thunders and Steve Nieve), Sinden has his instrument sound like his voice. His globose bass solos always hit a point where the sound goes into the upper register and yowls (rather like high notes on a cello). This is just what his vocals do. In *Egg*, Doug Stewart's *Woman Painted* and Hammond organ/Libro combinations had torn up rock into new figurative: here his solo says an earnest literary — analytical and lyrical at once — which floods in after Sinden's vocals with an inestimable power. Unlike many Prog guitarists, Phil Miller uses effects pedals to merge his playing with the ensemble rather than grandstand. Combine that with Pip Pyle's amazing drumming

— ever freshly conceived and enthusiastic — and you have a groove combo to die for.

Hatfield Choice: Archive Recordings 1973-1975 Volume 1 is the group's own selection from BBC Radio 1 sessions for John Peel (as Cox points out, Peel extended Prog's overblown corporate focus, but loved groups like the Hatfield's), plus selections from 1973-74 gigs in London, Paris, Rotterdam, Emmen and Amsterdam (June 1974). The sessions sound excellent: the live numbers are occasionally raucous and frustrated, but always exciting. Pyle cites John Cofano, Spike Jones, The Bonus Doo Doo Band, Monty Python and Frank Zappa as influences. They're all here, but transmogrified into a music of pitch, wit and sanctity England has never produced.

HEY COLOSSUS II HEY COLOSSUS II

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

While hardcore rock can be restricted by the beat, angry insularity of its own logic, and stoner rock can often be too out of it to understand the meaning of the term, London five piece Hey Colossus synthesizes the best of both genres. Hey Colossus II, the follow up to their new album *debut* Hey Colossus Hates You And You And You, doesn't summon up the obnoxious word of the blackest Metal (the cover is grey with delicate black sketching). Instead, they craft space around their moribund assault, aiming for the precise balance of mass and space of Shellac or Fugazi.

It's paradoxical that while the heaviest, blackest rock relies on the primal immediacy of the riff, many of its strongest moments emerge in the most epic symphonic works — notably Sleep's 60 minute *Jonestown*, more or less constructed from several distinct 'movements'. Similarly, each headlong assault on Hey Colossus II is followed by an intermission of sensuous feedback. The ten minute assault of "Take It" is a carefully calibrated exercise in electrical overload, where warm riffage slowly begins to arc and crackle like a piston in a storm. Hey Colossus II's apocalyptic interchanges between three guitarists finally resolve into the long-gestating Sabbath hammer blows of "Raise The Flag (The Planet's Curse)".

Hey Colossus's brand of Metal attempts a restrained aggression that, over the length of an album, attains a satisfying architectural symmetry. At their zenith, in the midst of the longform workouts, they come close to touching simultaneous blueprints of Neil's motorik momentum and Barrio Pond's forthrightness of distortion.

WAYNE HORVITZ & ROBIN HOLCOMB SOLOS

BY PHILIP CLARK

Seaside based pianist/composer husband and wife team Wayne Horvitz and Robin Holcomb have often collaborated together on stage, but *Solos* is their first recorded project. There's nothing here likely to lighten the heaves or challenge our perspective on the piano but it's an attractive album nonetheless, layered with idiosyncratic ideas and cogent improvisation. Comparing original compositions and free passages with covers of Wayne Shorter's "Armageddon", the folk tune "Bustin' My Hip" and the incongruous

presence of "Stars Fall On Alabama", Horvitz and Holcomb alternate tracks as they play solo. You're never in doubt who's playing, and a future *Duos* must surely be on the cards.

Horvitz is probably best known for his work with John Zorn's Naked City and his electric jazz group Zoro Machine. Although Holcomb's publicity brief would have you believe she pitches her work more towards the singer-songwriter tradition, in many respects her playing feels more knowledgeable and 'out'. Her "The Pleasures Of Motion" has a deceptively nonchalant introduction but then stretches into a freely floating construct, with clattery harmony underlying the ambiguity of its structure. In noticeable contrast Horvitz teases the structure of "Armageddon" from the inside, respectfully displacing and embellishing its intriguing changes. Elsewhere, Horvitz defines an icy cool sparseness on his "Interpretation #2" and Holcomb's 13 minute "Before The Sunset Comes" reveals a folkliter side to her playing, but there's still an objective edge that allows her to evoke Bach and Evans. An intimate, introspective album.

THE HOWLING HEX (FEATURING NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY) ALL NIGHT FOX DRUG CITY CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Hagerty's fading and famous career has already shed groups as explosive as Pussy Galore and Royal Trux. His latest incarnation The Howling Hex have already produced three limited vinyl only albums in the last year, but this collection on Drug City is their first widely available release. Opener "Now, We're Gonna Slay" lays its cards on the table to reveal an aces high flush swamp R&B psych-pop. Captain Beefheart himself would struggle to out-think. Lysergic dreams of the hit parade are also present on the male/female cast and response number "Activity Rides" or the slow burn march of "Cast Aside The Façade", but elsewhere the music into bad sex rifling and dented chords for women's ears. The two songs "Insulted With Mentality" or "To His Front Door". Hagerty's guitar improvisation is too meandering ever to nail a riff in once place — they shift and evolve through each song, waiting to find their place on Peaches compilations yet to come.

ANDREW KÖTTING SHANGHAI FROLIC VERTIGO/MAGAZINE/DECCA CD

BY CLIVE BELL

"So noisy! Let's go out for some air," say the dearily enunciated voices, first in Chinese, then in English. But outside there's no escape from the racket. In a reversal of human and machine roles, people are bashing metal with hammers, while a digital robot pipes out "We Wish You A Merry Christmas". Essentially the track is swept away by a wonderfully plodding voice that could be shepherding manic drivers, or possibly tantalising Shanghai gamblers.

Andrew Köttling is an English national treasure, an extremely independent-minded film maker. His 1996 film *Gallant* introduced Köttling himself, accompanied by his grandmother and severely disabled child, around the coast of Britain. Now comes *Shanghai Frolic* — you get the theme. Spending last summer in Shanghai, he plays with the idea of a Shubertist wander, riding his

Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapen formats

UK sound collageist Andrew Liles



Very nice to have some vinyl by the great UK sound collageist, **Andrew Liles**. The *Guzzene Machines* (Klang Galerie 7") has four tracks that mix Liles's trademarked drone onbans with a variety of other sonic events. A listener can seem to pick out a balloon at one moment, a carousel twinkler at another, some bad, bad children, a pair of crows juggling walnuts and then a guy having trouble getting his particle generator started on a particularly cold morning. The pieces are splendid in terms of both width and depth, which is especially cool given how many people seem to be chasing laugh-but-stays in this particular sonic arena.

A two new to my ears and household are **Bad Waste**, from New York. Their debut, *AKA Bad Waste* (Dogg Pony 7") is a wonderful and massive slab of avant pop dissections. The vocals almost have the glacially calm (at times) of mid-period northern Ohio outfits (just pre-*Off*), but the music is shimmery and strange, almost a lost *Rapin*. Records one-off from the early 80s. I can't even tell what the instrumentation is, so you know it's good.

It might not be new, but it was only through immense wandering that I even discovered the existence of a superb **Billy Childish** single, *Evidence Against Myself/Am The Strange Hero Of Hunger* (Amphetamine Reptile 7"). This was apparently produced to coincide with a Childish gallery appearance in the Midwest, and it couples a gorgeously brutal solo electric blues track with a bodeous, hubristic ovab of pure spoken power. Great stuff.

Although the CO was dealt with in these pages last year, it is worth noting that **Rayon Rula**, by legendary English guitarist **Mike Cooper**, has been released on vinyl (Cabin 23107). The pieces include samples from the work of island-jazz-eclectic Arthur Lyman and Australian bluesmen, which are run through Cooper's tabulating guitars and electronics. The resulting work glows in a very odd way, like a phosphorescent Hawaiian shark seen across a dark and lumpy field at midnight.

The **Decider** are from Scotland, and *Unshakable* (Toppens 7") is a nicely deconstructed piece of art rock, touching on a variety of schools. One of the tracks depicting is the plundering of the Joy Division vocals, which I assume pleased off a bunch of people no end. But not us. Still, the other two tracks are actually more enjoyable in a roughshod counterpoise *Off* way. One is a true-like

stomp through *off* rubble, the other a deconstructing stroll through a kind of post-jangle garden that splitters and echoes like some weird mix of a lost Peel session by The Nees.

Dylahouse, unfortunately, are not an all-female skate group, as I had hoped. It's actually Mike Dylahouse, from Michigan. Chari Smoking/P (Ghostly International 7") creates a sort of Bowie-meets-Shields vibe on the A side (my daughter digs it). But it all falls into a very strange bad-Zappa pit on the flip.

'Duke' Garwood is British, but sounds as though he rents the Vermont hills with the Child Of Miracles gang on his debut single, *Sweet Back/Blow Blossom* (Loag 7"). Indeed, if I didn't know better, I might suspect that these two acoustic tracks of frosty avant blues might be the work of lost COM artist, Willie "Gutbucket" Lane. But this is no trick, just blues.

The second release is here from the latest vinyl sequence by **The Rubber Bie**, *The Water Rise No Her Is Held* (Dekorder 107) was recorded last spring in Iceland (and elsewhere), although there is little to indicate that its origins are truly terrestrial. What whizzes around the sides of this disc are alternating parts to parts of universal deafness. In one of these places we find the very core of an enormous black star breathing through its nostrils, exhaling smaller star clusters as though they were so much smog. The other trails lead to a machine graveyard, where the spirits of useless tools amplify their longing to be reborn through a series of electromagnets that have been half-buried in the surrounding fields, like so many phetles. Both ways work for us. You?

May be slow, but someone just gave me a copy of **Lowie la Affs** *Make Out Fall Out Make Up* (Whit's Row Rapture 7"), and it really is a blast. The horn moves over the top of the blop is a way that no one really has since Laura Log's heyday in *X-Ray Sire*. And the female voice splatters, mixed with thickly pulsed punk downstroking and ruddierless C80 rhythm pummels is really pretty addictive. Anyway, all I really know is that is that they're English and they've released another single since. But it's hard to believe it could top the crude rush of this one, or match the beauty of the silken-smeared folk ideas.

A swinging alternative to the Windy City's neo-tron scene is provided by **Mahel Belouef**, whose second single, *The Vampires Lament Is His Nurse/Each Day Is Different And The Same As Cocks* (Flamewheel 7") is an ass-fetters.

Reminding me of the whole generation of lost children of Beefheart, and also the early work of the *Scione* is here, this record is really quite wonderful, surging into unexpected places with a rhythmic grace and sophistication that belies close attention to the works of Mayo Thompson.

The flip split this time is a picture disc, shared by **Irene Moon and Ortho**. *Deridit Ask/How Humans Would Benefit By Behaving More Like Insects* (Ignominous 7"). Irene's piece is well chopped and channelled, making us understand (for the first time) what it might be like if our teeth could talk and sing and play. The Ortho track is less overtly anthropomorphic, but does have the kind of persistence that one associates with insects. It's very easy to imagine a little troupe of homets driving mini-bulldozers across vast expanses of white party while it plays. And perhaps that is its point. Just watch out for those gerolls, Eugene.

Great punk-funk fly dynamics from **The New Flesh**, a young outfit from the New Mexican area. They're led more down the middle punk than anything 'Tut and his cronies ever did. But on their debut *ER*, *The New Flesh* (New Flesh 7"), they have a very nice way of crafting huge puddles of pus and music. The combination of feedback, dust and percussive fuzz is pretty neat. It almost (but not quite) reminds me of some of the Cleveland anti-punk groups of the early 80s. Nice word sounder sleeve, as well.

Wow. In *Sweden's* bio they claim to be going after a sound akin to *Big Flame* or *Baghdad*. What a thought! And hey, if that's their goal, you'd have to say they were pretty successful. Their debut, *The Minkler Album* (Run Out 7"), is very 80s sounding punk-punk smut with speedy, slappy guitar parts, rhythms that come straight into the early 80s sounds and casually crafted vocals. No way I would have pegged this year of release in a blinkfold test.

As nearly as I can tell, Sweden's *SMH* has now become *Engel's Shift*. But the first shift single was still missed on their hometown label, and carries with it a certain pride of place. Have *No Fury/Jag Var I Ruben* (Glendelam 7") has a beautiful depth to its message. On the A side, tones shift around in the foreground, setting off clouds of echoes into the distance, while a thin gap moves towards us and then away, inside the darkness. On the flip, there is a sequence of rumbles that expands into the sound of gently whirling machines of loving grace.

Jacob Smigel is not really part of this new weird America thing, but his recent recordings have been wonderful, earth-toned slabs of strange American folk art. *Lovers & Onians* (Not Not Fun 7") would be a great introduction to his stuff if you've not heard it. There's a certain quality to his work that makes me think of young Paul Westerberg, but the stuff here is really very much in its own old tradition. The basic piece is folksy, although the overlays can be intensely psychedelic. It almost makes me imagine a male Barbara Manning at times — but these herrings are all red. If you like hand coloured pic sleeves or truly home-wrought sounds, dig here. Not generic acid folk by any means, but quite shiny.

Beating new lathe by western Massachusetts's *drone 1"* double squadron, **Ben Of Earth**, *Naked Phase/Examination Of Present Life* (Static 7") combines the sound of long-legged rubber ducks bobbing in a sea of roomy-sounding messages of both the distant turn of the wheel. There seems to be one side of earth and one side of bone, but frankly I can't tell them apart.

There's not much else floating around regarding this release, but I am of the opinion that *Inver Earthquake by The Salsola*. **Revolutionary Jazz Band** (Gold Soundz 7") is the work of Rochester, NY's Pengo, operating under a different name. This one-sided piece of blackness is quite entertaining, using electronics in a way that is neither very *Salsola* or *revolutionary*, but what the heck? The idea seems to be to scrape everything together and move the dialogue forward with small missed blocks of old school electronics that arrive from directions first defined by fissioned dummies. Which these guys are not a hard one to peg exactly, but good and good nonetheless. Especially the part where the neighbourhood kids run through the middle of everything.

Widens *The Bear's All The Pans* (I Can Breathe (Beta Lactam Ring 10") is a retinal sense of some of the group's earliest recordings. The four tracks show many signs of heavy human handling. They seem assembled from both things the group recorded themselves, and also from what they "discovered". Women together, they make for a very pretty basket. At times the noise is redolent of heavy precursors (Faust and The Residents both spring easily to mind), but ultimately it gives off a unique and lovely stink that is all its own. □ Reviewed by Byron Cook

bicycle played by a compass and recording what he finds on a Dictaphone. Eight notes have generated eight collapsed soundscapes, a half-hour work that is being generously given away on CD with the current issue of *drone* magazine. The project has also produced a limited edition handmade book, and Kötting hopes to finish up with a sound and video installation inspired by Hitchcock's *Rear Window*.

Kötting is a lot of fun adding his found sounds together—the results are gory, humorous and more than a little mysterious, and they underline the dense variety of some fauna clogging Chinese urban byways. These sounds are alive with birds, children, pigs, pop music, heroic choirs and damaged machines. He interviews his own very comments, plus sketches of language tapes. So we learn to say "you and your big mouth" in Chinese. Kötting's working method rejoices in the chaos. "There's this kind of schizophrenic voice that always comes out and tells me to do stuff which doesn't seem to fit," he says in a recent interview. "Do you ever get voices in your head? I respond to them."

FRANCISCO LÓPEZ LIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO

BY BRIAN MARLEY

As with *Live in St. Petersburg* (Francisco López's second recording on Botop-Boy, *Live in San Francisco* comes with a black blindfold. His concerts usually take place under a strict regime of sensory deprivation. Having blindfolded his audience in a darkened auditorium, sometimes he also mutes himself and his equipment in a black tent. Blatantly open for home listening seems an absurd proposition; nonetheless, I've listened to *Live in San Francisco* both with and without blindfolds. The principal benefit of using it is that distractions are kept to a minimum. But awareness of time passing is also reduced, and one can submit more fully to the music.

What sets López apart from most other electronic/noise composers is, essentially, his boldness of conception and the teasing ambiguity of his materials. The dense, granular sounds he likes to use (small and large grains, some soft, some hard) are sculpted into striking forms, and it's often difficult to tell whether the material is mechanical or organic in origin. The first piece here, "Live At The Lab—Hexaphone," is a whisper of noise which gradually gets louder until, dramatically, it plunges into a deep and darkly resonant chase. Eventually it emerges and rises again in volume, achieving an almost orchestral degree of complexity. Having reached a peak of howling, ear-scouring activity it stops there—no development, no coda, just an abrupt termination of the signal. In terms of structure this could hardly be simpler, but it's surprisingly elegant and very effective.

11 months later, in 2001, López returned to San Francisco. His performance at Blueflood/theatercamp comprises the second track. It follows on immediately from the first with soft, rhythmically spaced detonations, like distant thunder. Soft noise, especially in López's hands, is a strange phenomenon, rich, subtle and diffuse—and, above all, alluring. This is a longer piece than the first and its structure is more elaborate, its unfolding more gradual. But what's pleasing is how well the two tracks fit together,

how effectively they work as one, as though they were conceived as such.

PINKIE MACLURE & JOHN WILLS CAT'S CRADLE

TRIFUNGLIC CD

BY MIKE BARNES

There's a timeless feel to Cat's Cradle, in terms of mood, sense and the capricious quality of the verse structures. "Slowly, Slowly The Water Flows" is typical, with its combination of Wills's percussion, plangent acoustic guitar and lyre, and MacLure's miniature concertina and bells. Their instrumental sound twinkles with light casting the shadows in which MacLure's gasps, exhalations and vocal meanderings can be found.

Once the drummer at Loco, Wills was also a multi-instrumentalist in The Hair And Skin Trading Company, while MacLure is no stranger to touch song and avant cabaret styles. But the bluesy grounding of her extraordinary voice keeps it free of histrionics, sliding effortlessly from a nasal throatiness up to its higher register. This is demonstrated on the title track, on which Wills's drums mark out time with a ritual sweep.

Cat's Cradle is the product of a potent musical chemistry. "Good Luck Look Upon You" is built on the sort of steady ticking figures that evoke Macy Gray's "So Tonight That I Might See," with Wills's E-bow guitar droning looming out of the background. The mood is largely contemplative throughout but it all opens up beautifully on "Over And Over And Over." MacLure's lyrics are filled with elemental images, but are often mixed together, tapping into feelings of sorrow or discontent. Here the song's melancholy is lifted by sight of marine horizons and the space above, into which her voice gracefully soars.

MANDARIN MOVIE

ASPIR-ETHNIC CD

BY DEREK WAMBLEY

12 years ago, Chicago's Rob Mazurek was playing clubs in Edinburgh and recording what Richard Cook described as "straight hard pop, direct and unadorned." Now living in Brazil and working on a range of art, design and music projects, his voracious eclecticism brings together players as diverse as noise guitarist Alan Licht and avant garde trombonist Steve Swell in the sprawling Mandarin Movie ensemble. Mazurek plays cornet and is responsible for editing/reshaping the group's recordings. It's an attempt to evoke a San Ra-esque vision of a cosmic noise to overload the senses and stir the soul. The results may not reach such lofty spiritual heights, but Mandarin Movie is certainly an intense, cleansing and singularly arresting listen.

It starts with juddering drum polyrhythms, chattering whir with wind flapping keyboard clusters, playing us immediately in classic Miles Davis territory. Mandarin Movie moves even further out than the distorted net of the Agallat and Pangea sessions into the brutal Metal Industrialism of God and the electronic freakout of Merbow. Xenotic-style time-clones and detuned guitar glazes as grey as the bottom of the bucket bring soap lather and pollution one another.

However, it's the smaller sound sketches that are the most successful—brass arrangements like wild extrapolations from Herbie Hancock's *The Prisoner*, as dense and bewildering as

driving through fog; a restrained distorted guitar interlude reminiscent of Funkadelic's "Maggot Brain." The louder moments develop into violent apocalypses, submerging intricate jazziness in swampy rock noise.

MAREK IT'S THESE MAGIC MOMENTS THAT I'M LIVING FOR

NEOSON CD

BY NICK BOUTHAQUE

For Austrian singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Christoph Marek, magic moments come from many places in many guises. This album contains straightforward stum and shout protest folk in the form of "Call To Arms" or the ramshackle, buzz bass-augmented "Do You Remember The Day?" a Windergarten organ suicide note in "Love Is A Wonderful Thing" (reminiscent of Pink Floyd's "Nobody Home"); echo-soaked four-track-to-4 balladry in "I Regret"; the plain and simple longing of a piano and simple live song called "Still I Love You"; raucous confessions to a law for a convenient if empty love with "My Blow Up Doll"; poignant electronics-drenched slow marches sounding sunny moments on beaches where the singer once held her breath. "Get Me Some Loving"; and stark fingerpicked Country folk teetering with "Come On Boy, Stop Your Crying".

There are forebears to this kind of approach. It would be marvellous if Marek was unaware of Lou Barlow's many Sebastic incantations, or Bob's beatbox mutations. However, his sheer eclecticism transcends influences to become a modus operandi in its own right. Part of a restless listening generation, picking of styles lighter and thicker, Marek is the obvious outcome—a perfectly rooted performer. His appropriation of any form can never be authentic, but nor is it dangerously inauthentic. Only his choice to openve into and to author all the songs and sounds himself means there is a consistency on his output. The bending face that he chooses to do it this way on this occasion.

LASSE MARHAUG SPAGHETTI WESTERN WINDOW: LIVE IN CHICAGO

UTECR CD

RAS MOSHE MUSIC NOW

UNIT

LIVE SPIRITS NO 1

UTECR CD

RAS MOSHE MUSIC NOW

UNIT

LIVE SPIRITS NO 2

UTECR CD

FRODE GJERSTAD & STEVE HUBBARD ONE FOOT MOVING: LIVE IN STAVANGER

UTECR CD

BY BRIAN MORRISON

The etymology is Middle Low German—"utdrift" means outside, bastard, rejected—the provenance is Keith Urban's new grassroots label in Milwaukee, and the music's an unexpected blend of New York Improv, Euro-free and Norwegian noise. Strong, quirky design on cardboard sleeves, minimal info, limited edition releases that probably shouldn't be.

Saxophonist Ras Moshe made an out-score with Schematic, an album of tough, centred free

blows that unlike most of the wannabe Fire Music right now has somewhere to go back to at night. Though essentially improvised, Moshe and the Music Now Unit begin with basic compositional ideas and work outward from the centre. His players know how to work with him rather than simply plod independent paths, and the first disc, recorded at Syracuse Festival Film Festival and at an unspecified Blackout form, is a winner. Drummer Jackson Roll and bassist Matt Hayner seem to be regular partners, but bassists Ken Filiano and François Girard (who are on the latter disc only) are making names for themselves in NYC at the moment, and Moshe obviously has no problem getting guys to work with him. I liked Chris Fortes's electric piano shimmer. The second disc is even more ambitious, but slightly attenuated in execution. The first piece features a percussiveless group, again two bassists but with a singer, but the bulk of the disc is by the core trio, who sound excited.

Frøde Gjerdstad's work is well known from Detail with John Stevens and Johnny Dym, but Steve Hubbard's extraordinary percussion sculpture provides a fresh and uncharted setting for Frøde's lesser known claret and bass claret work. The six pieces are of widely differing durations and it's fair to say that the longer takes set Hubbard's absorbed approach more. The eleven-minute is more focused on the shorter cuts, tending to noodle when the duration exceeds ten minutes. The live sound can't be faulted, very present and exact.

Norway's Lasse Marhaug is a quiet genius. His noise manipulations have often worked better in the context of films—Thomas Eikrem's *Interstella*, Billy Bragg's video *Old & Bodily Fluids*—and in other collaborations, notably with Merbow, than his free-standing solo efforts. The live performance from NWUW puts most of the existing catalogue in the shade. The coming cartridge cracks might almost be a tribute to Cage, but the pieces open up into a wildly zoological soundscape that is as warmly funny as it is virtuosically realised.

CHIE MUKAI & GARY SMITH EIGHT +

PARANTRIC CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

At the end of the 1970s Chie Mukai became involved with Tokyo's improvising scene under the aegis of Tetsuya Kousagi. Fuses volume and founder member of the legendary Jai Mahal Travellers. More recently she has recorded for PSF with her psychedelically inclined group, Chie-Shou. She plays the erhu, a two-stringed Chinese violin, or kiku in Japanese. She also plays percussion and sometimes sings in a wailing voice. On *Eight +*, recorded in London in 2001, she is embraced in nine improvised duets with highly distinctive electric guitarist Gary Smith.

Mukai's playing has an obsessive quality, absorbed and insistent within its own chosen limits, whether played, bowed or bent. She seems to be working her way into the materials, burrowing in or wrapping them steadily around herself. Smith, on the other hand, is extrovert and expressive. He queries sounds from his instrument, gouges of edge noise, swirls of electric dust, raw scapes, pedalling throbbing and metallic scats. It's a drama of contrasting temperaments: Mukai focused on some remote

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

In deep: Art Ensemble Of Chicago



Subtitled "Deep Jazz from The USA 1970-85", **New Thing!** (Soul Jazz 381P/2XCD) features a host of artists who work swelter in the immediate, scorched aftermath of the 60s Civil Rights movement. Although it contains pieces by The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Sun Ra (in his case, "Angels And Demons At Play" which dates from 1957 but harks forward decades hence) and Archie Shepp, this is not quite a free jazz blowout in the *Sonus As Your Life* mode as *Vol 1* Wilmer (who contributes both sleeve notes and photos to this collection) would have it. As Ensemble Of Chicago's "Funky ACOG" is, as groove-based as its title suggests, a vital piston of a rit, with the melodically energetic of Lester Bowie's trumpet weaving in and out of a diadist net of Moons and brights here, Shepp's "Money Blues", meanwhile, instigates a brass street scene in hollowing out of the cash-strapped privations of his people, while Rashied Ali And Frank Lucu venture further into New World Jazz terrain en "Ouro Chastum", with its rattling percussion and nervous wisps of Kasbah-jazz tune.

The opening "Street Rap" by Maxwell is a lively snapshot of the everyday, jangle cakewalk of streetwise, while even Alice Coltrane's stately rendition of husband John's "In Love Supreme" is underpinned by a James Brown-style "Funky Drummer" bassbeat. Everyone, it seems, was at one time or another, infected by the boogie. But most of the colouring and most of the collection is derived from African music, ballet, struts, Eastern philosophy, ascending to a frequent recourse to exotica and utopianism, dreams of fertile, sunlit uplands to come, a sublime form of escape from the humid political, social and social realities of the day. Ra's aforementioned "Angels And Demons At Play" is a case in point, with its tropical intimations of imaginary places and times (any place or time but America in 1957) while Elvis Blass's "Tiberian Sonnets" takes cool repose in Eastern charms. Stanley Cowell's "El Space-O", meanwhile, is urbane and civil. Although music of this kind has been atomized for Tripple sampling and replication over the years, it is none of desperate times and present tension (rather the latent improvises of a more recent, cooler age) of Soul Jazz's most essential collection (CD).

To mark ten years of consistent marginalization, the Rochester, New York-based Carbone Records released 10 specially commissioned CD-series every 36.5 days throughout 2004. **10 Fr: Sines** (Carbone CD-R) gathers all of these releases plus a bonus DVD-R in a handsome wood and metal box that stands as one of the most defiantly beautiful manifestations of home-made, non-corporate packaging to come out of the CD-R revolution to date. In a way, what's happening with CD-Rs right now parallels much of what has been going on in the bootleg scene for the past few decades, where a potent

combination of subterfuge and love has birthed product of a quality that has far outstripped the voice and capabilities of the 'official' record labels, while dispensing with their legitimizing stamp altogether.

As well as setting an exemplary standard for would-be basement infidels, **10 Fr Series** provides a capsule overview of some of the most intriguing mergers of avant theory and post-primitivism currently orbiting the mainstream. Besides masterminding the whole Carbone Records project, Joe Turris is a formidable guitarist in his own right. Along with his activities as a member of the post-IAPMS agro unit Perig, he moonlights under the solo guise of Joe-N. Joe-N's contribution to the box is *Live At Cirochroch*, where he plays guitar, punnels piano and toms chunks of feedback from thin air. There's more than a hint of Lester Mazzacane in the subtle thrust of his playing, but there's a stubby majesty to the way that he wrestles with fuzzy single notes that is all his own. Boud Steene, the UK duo of Dylan Nykos and Karen Conner, are represented by 30-plus minutes of *Hyne For The Crippled Mattia*, a phased fix of sick, toxic noise that follows an intricate structural logic that is supernaturally satisfying. Tom Carter of Chameleons hooks up with ex-Ash Castles On The Great Coast member Shawn McMillan for *Colors For*, a series of still, low-level impressions that vibrate with a terse, apocalyptic air. Carter's side work is particularly hypnotic, the slightest flick of his wrist sending small bulwarks of mist straight up your spine. Eddie Flowers's legendary Crowcove unit cross lurching groove sprawl with a wild mix of cut-up sound and comedy shorts on *Melbourne Cabbage Race*, while Dead Machines, the duo of Wolf Eyes' John Olson and Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Woods's Josh O'Rourke, navigate zero gravity with nothing but a pair of lead boots, some loose spoons of time and a huge grid of tactile electricity on *Mystery Of The Fall Off Atlanta Part Two*. These are also worthwhile contributions from Ming (aka Campbell Kneale of Billville Cat Motel), Aldo Gilmore, Howard Seler and The Cherry Point, Coffee and Mike Shifflet. Fit this one alongside Revanent's Albert Ayler box for a lesson in the best way to prime a countercultural electronics (CD).

While Fat Cat's LP releases slowly mature a weighty roster of artists, their split 12" releases are unexpected, enigmatic bolts out of the blue. It doesn't get much more enigmatic than Nonono No 1 from the Democratic Republic Of Congo, contributing two tracks on **Split #18** (Fat Cat 12"), their music is like a diaseg himic record fed into a ring modulator, the gesticulations electronic effect that jumps multiple harmonies together to create a terribly dissonant music. This is African pop music so fit and abseign it simply sounds utterly alien on record, perhaps giving a more authentic dimension through the massive scale of spoken word live. The other side features the

meditative guitar/drum improvisations of The Dead C, sounding graver yet somehow more sensuous than ever before. Like a battered old super 8 film, the marks and bruises of the recording process feed as rich in significance as the content therein. The hypos, solo project of Glenn Doreland from the Jewelled Anier collective, contribute five intimate songs/ragas to **Split #17** (Fat Cat 12") as warm and welcoming as afternoon autumn sunlight. Australian Chris Smith completes the release with blank, clearing guitar noise which recalls Flying Saucer Attack at their most dense and obscure. (SW)

Self-styled "positive music quarterly" *Unknown Public* has made a collection from its first four issues, now out of print, and titled it, unimpeachably, **Unknown Public 03-04 Volume One** (Unknown Public CD/book), comprising "music and more from the first four issues". This audio journal's mission has been to explore "non-reporter" music - indicating that it has defined itself in relation to the academic establishment. As a result, and despite its eclecticism, UP has often sounded a little too clean out. Happily the journal has loosened its tie to the over the years and dropped the half-empty overseas box packaging in favour of more handsome and compact CD/book packages. Among the quality electroacoustics and elaborate aesthetic blueprints, there are a few gems: a typically multitrack piano improvisation by Alex Maguire; a rag for multitracked trombones by Fayaz Waj; Jan Steen's stridently ebullient translation of Indonesian pop music; and Nicolas Collins's elegiac "SBI Lives" featuring a skipping CD of Italian Renaissance music. (PC)

Kitsune R (Kitsune CO) is about what you'd expect from a French art/fashion/design collective - utterly as accurate electro-rock and party disco, featuring the likes of Joakim, Volga Sweet and Captain Corneille, that would be as at home in the high street boutique Colette as in the Batouf. But trends become trends, in the best of times, because they're enjoyable and diverting. I won't begrudge LDO Soundsystem's "Loving My Edge" programme for introducing Dalt Punk to the rock kids any more than I'll deride the rock kids for dancing. And they'll dance to "Daring", by Popstar Computer, to TonyRock's Maine-based electronic throwback "You Gotta Know", complete with vocals so squarely they said Kanye West: teaching for the holium. Simian Mobie Disco turn in a surprisingly kinetic track of glitch, jangling electro, and *Al Assad* takes it back to New Jack Swing on a heartless ode to nymphomania. What the rock kids seem to want out of dance music is personality and every song here is brimming with it, whether in the gruff growl of Post No Bills or the fly affect of Hot Chip. The best track, though, blending the Arctic urges of Aval, Maelw Jonson and Black Strobe, is a hidden cut created only to the

pseudonym Oester Schmidt; Long live faceless techno bollocks! (PS)

Compiled by Aert Delgandis for the Australian market from the catalogues of Belgian sister labels Sub Rosa and Quatermass, **Passive Platforms** (Sonic Aranca CD) consists of music that forces us to stop (whatever else we're doing) and become mindful, that "will bring meaning to the quiet spaces" that's what it says in the sleeve notes. All the pieces were made between 1998 and 2003 with the exception of former Velvet Underground drummer Angus Macdonald's drone-based "Tones #2", which was recorded in the mid-1990s. The dreamy, dub-inflected atmospherics and sleek gnomish beats of the first track, Pan American's "The Passage", set the tone for what follows. Two or three tracks sit sturdily in the background, like wall wallpaper, and rather than captivate the mind they allow it to drift away and latch on to other things. They are, in other words, a bit boring. But the best, such as Taylor Duespeire and Kenneth Kerschner's glitch-piano cut-up, "02.15.02", the string-laden title track from David Lopez's Black Chamber, Yoshirine Harino's lively and slowly evolving "Platform Vibration II", and a sound's edge remake of Calla's "Slum Creeper", quietly hold the listener's attention and pay dividends. (BM)

This Place Is Dreaming (H-RAAK CO) is subtitled "Remembering And Transferring The Sites And Sounds Of Brussels". An accompanying text indicates that the city-wide project from which the CD arose, Brussels' Secret Matter, carried its part of the Argos festival 2004, was an attempt to "convert Brussels' sonic reality into music". Maybe that's true of the majority of the pieces. But Emilio Lopez-Menchero's "Swimming Rutanda (Excerpt)" is an understated find recording the challenge to the listener: find the music in the everyday. And former Sillustopetea member Heire Jijgibluu comes somewhat by merit: gushing music - his electronics and the ringing chords of Dorel's electric guitars - onto interview material called from the spoken word archives of Brussels' Belthout Ons Ios (Brussels Belongs To Us!). These consciousness don't really matter. *This Place Is Dreaming* is a fascinating collection of sound collages and soundscapes, some of which, by Genns Kynikides, Oliver Cojones, Jesse Bennett and Maria Blondel) have been justified till the pigs squeak. Four of the 18 contributors (Hildegarde Westermark, Mark Baan, AJ Orda and Yoko Neuss) draw on material from India, Amsterdam, Paris and Japan/Italy is Brussels, a cosmopolitan city, dreaming of the distant origins of some of its residents, or are they actual holiday snapshots? The sleeve notes say that these samplings from elsewhere "create a bridge to other atmospheres and cultures". Musical or not, they're very effective. (BM) *Reviewed by* Phil England, David Keenan, Ben Mackay, Philip Sherrman, David Shubs and Derek Makinsky

point of convergence: Smith centrifugal in its tendencies, enusive and flamboyant. Remarkably the pair occupy common ground to operate within a shared frame of intention, bound together by dynamic tensions generated from their difference and by their mutual attentiveness.

MY CAT IS AN ALIEN / JIM O'Rourke
FROM THE EARTH TO THE SPHERES VOLUME 4
ORNA UP

MY CAT IS AN ALIEN
THROUGH THE REFLEX OF THE RAIN
FREE PORCUPINE SOCIETY CD

ROBERTO OPALIO
CHANTS FROM ISOLATED GHOSTS
OPAQ CD-R

BY DAVID KERNAN

The Italian Opalio brothers' ongoing series of limited edition LPs pairing old-time songs with the likes of Jaxko-Di Motherclucker and Thurston Moore with all-new broadcasts from their own personal sets, just keeps getting better. Much more than simply a diggy back to the stars, these high profile face-offs have forced the brothers to raise their game, with the result that the series stands as an archive of some of their boldest moves yet committed to wax.

The latest volume might be the best yet. O'Rourke's side really upps the ante, with a newly enhanced recording drawn from his early work with tabletop guitar. The recording affords a very low pass through the mechanics of the instrument itself, with a set-up that foregrounds the unamplified snap of the various strategies that he applies to excite the strings, setting the sound as transmitted by the speakers a little further off. It feels like hearing your ear wedged between the pickup and strings. O'Rourke starts out with a dense, milking drone that's alive with microtonal activity as the hardy-gurdy conceptions of Kelli Harris from here he moves to a dance of fast and loose notes that almost sound like a spontaneous, post-industrial rethink of traditional grammar. Despite its all-encompassed genesis, the whole piece feels sedately plotted.

My Cat Is An Alien's side starts off with a flickering loop of pure vocal muck from Roberto Opalio. His new vocal form is one of the central highlights of this latest batch, a wordless style that has a disturbing, pre-articulate quality to it. At points it sounds like Basil Kirchin's tape work with autistic children. From the flurry of vocal dementia that opens the side, the group move into more guitar based textures, with a single, pulsing baseline illuminated by strands of lonesome notes in a way that mimes Christina and Tom Carter's work with Chakramides. But the Opalio brothers push it all the way to catharsis, with electric strings slowly dissolving into a shrill bombard of cathartes. In a way, *Through The Reflex Of The Rain* feels like a continuation of the strategies initiated on the split LP moving from a monolith of electricity worthy of David Tudor through to more levitational cynical work. Chants from *Isolated Ghosts* is the rock wildcard here, and one of the best releases from the Opaq stable to date, with Roberto chasing enough space to really explore his new vocal approach. The results are extraordinary, with stalling alarm tones and deep fields of hallucinogenic environmental sound

eerily illuminated by the uneasily light beaming from his lungs.

NURSE WITH WOUND / JIM O'Rourke
ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 1:
TAPE MONKEY MOOCH
BETA-LACTAM RING CD

NURSE WITH WOUND / CYCLOBE
ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 2:
PARAPARAPARALLELO-GRAMMATIC
BETA-LACTAM RING CD

NURSE WITH WOUND / IRR.APP.(EXT.)
MUTE BELL EXTINCTION PROCESS
BETA-LACTAM RING CD

BY KEITH MOULNE

I once got into hot water with Nurse With Wound's Steve Stapleton by suggesting that previous reviews of his material had been disappointing, produced by collaborators unworthy of his genius (Stapleton took issue with the term 'genius' rather than the basic thrust of the argument). Luckily, his activities to these times superb new albums offer some truly sensory aesthetic rewards: one was 'dissected, forked and re-grown by Jim O'Rourke', Cyclobe's Osmar Brown and Stephen Thresher 'dismantled, nipped and set fire to' the material for the second installment, while for the third record, longtime Nurse ally Matt Waldron, operating under his inapp (ent.) moniker, 'manipulated, disguised, abused and beautified' Stapleton's and Colin Potter's original work. It's the Nurse aesthetic that shines through this trilogy most strongly, with each of the reviews — sorry, the dissections/manipulations/beautifications (one hesitates to use 'manip') — showing due deference to the masters by allowing the original material to pass through their own aesthetic filter essentially intact.

Nurse's music is truly surreal, yet rooted in some kind of universal dream logic that is utterly able to dispense to its listeners two aspects of their art might elicit the diffidence and resistance of their collaborators. The first is the way the duo manage to imbue familiar sounds (voices, metallic objects, the flute and sax of Hansi Fischer and the late Tim Berlie from *Keystroke* legends Xhol Caravan) with a hyper-real radiance and sharpness of focus, making further processing of the sound difficult without destroying its essential characteristics. More important still is the placement of these sounds in the context of the piece, the exquisite balance of repetition and surprise.

This is not music as a procession of moments, sensations and effects, a music whose meaning can survive any tinkering with its linear chronology. For all its apparent reclusiveness, its architectural mechanisms are complex, precise and difficult to take apart. The result is three records that all sound like Nurse With Wound, with key passages appearing across the collection. The leitmotif of what might be spending fishing nets fished and panned across the stereo spectrum shows how completely musical their use of simple sounds can be. It's a riveting trilogy which moths at various points the slowly billowing atmospheres of *Soliloquy For Luv*, the metallic voices of *Spinal Issues* and the deployment of relatively conventional instrumental music evident on recent

albums like *An Answered Prayer*. Though each album is highly recommended, the Jim O'Rourke disc is particularly good. The two 20 minute pieces ebb and flow, build and recede effortlessly, with guest David Tibet's distant guitar squall underpinning a dandy gurgling string passage that suggests the golden age of Funk's Rock In Opposition heres Uvuvuv. This is work of exceptional quality and power.

RAVING SONG SYSTEM
VOLUME ONE
MOON CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

A moody Swiss power trio made up of Simone Voltenweider on vocals, Demink Blum on piano and Remo Sagner on drums, with all three pitching in and shaking electronic sound chimes. *Raving Song System* display all the neat and burnished qualities normally associated with a bunch of music students out on a spree. The staff's all there and it's kept beautifully in check, but everything's just slightly out of whack at the same time. Electroacoustic textures shimmer and ripple together, Voltenweider shows sensitivity and control in her delivery and Sagner combines lightness of touch with sharpness of attack in his percussion work.

But then, dear God, you realise that each of the seven songs that make up this freely flowing cycle of compositions is actually a setting of a poem by ee cummings. What were these guys thinking? Set against the delicate nuances and playful tumbling rhythms of his verse, *Raving Song System* work, collectively determined arcs, together with the heavily underscored ebb and flow of their playing, suddenly appear clumsy and inappropriate. Form and function have somehow lost touch with each other, which is a shame, as they really play well together. They evidently know how to listen to each other; it's just a shame they didn't try listening a little more closely to their source material.

THE RESIDENTS
ANIMAL LOWERS
MUTE CD

BY SAM DAVIES

If Edward Albee can stage a West End play about a man in love with a cat, perhaps this latest album by veteran outsiders The Residents is tapping a more mainstream vein than first appears. *Animal Lowers* is a concept album that tries to embrace the animal inside us all — the animal identified by Freud in the form of those disruptive and anarchic desires which civilisation and its toolkit of ideologies seeks to repress.

As you'd expect from a group whose members have spent 30 years wearing eyeball masks and top hats, playful shifts of voice and persona mark each track. This is music as a series of adopted disguises that constantly defer attention from any biological authorial presence. The heavily filtered vocal to "On The Way To Dishonor" bubbles and purges through a surgery, inline ballad that carries a nasty twist as the feline narrator sets a sunbathing dog. "What Have My Chickens Done" is a strangely affecting lament, and one of several tracks with elaborate, post-reflected vocal arrangements, calling to mind the anguishes of Carla Bley or even Grace Slick. Keyboards, understated rhythms and disjointed melodies are all heavily processed and occasionally laced with

a live kit or submerged fuzz guitar

An excess of overly obvious performative strategies of animal imitation is thankfully averted, although all of the basic rhythm tracks are drawn from mating rhythms sampled from oodles and frogs. The Residents walk a precarious line between America's underbelly creepiness and a more mainstream absurdism. But when it works the feeling is of a strange empathy of a group saying to its listeners: "We are all as mediated as each other."

BRANDON ROSS
COSTUME
INTROGARDIE CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

As a vital longform participant in Henry Threadgill's music making, and as a member of the impressive, constrained power trio Hamet: Urban with bassist Malvin Gibbs and drummer JT Lewis, Brandon Ross has shown himself to be a dynamic electric guitarist with a healthy aversion to cliché and superficial effects. Costume is an elegant, often beautiful acoustic set, recorded with appropriate fidelity in New York in February 2004. It displays Ross's virtues with crystalline clarity. Arrangements are spacious and subtle, allowing silence and space to send his evocative patterning of melodic shapes. He's helped out by Lewis's subtle, restrained drumming and by the warm, resonant acoustic and electric bass playing of Stanislav Kolesch, both formerly fellow members of the Threadgill ensemble.

The strength of Costume lies partly in its thoughtful programming: a mix of originals, Ornette Coleman's "Race Face", an inventive setting of poetry written and recited by Sadeq Bey, and haunting adaptations of the Reverend Gary Davis's "I Am The Light" and the gospel standard "Twelve Gates To The City". The instrumentation has been carefully listened to the needs of each track and to the CD's overall feel. Ross sounds wonderfully spiky on soprano guitar interpreting the Coleman piece. He plays saxophone in a quietist that features Shari Taw's *Chorus* suite. His songs with soulful tenorless, an attractive combination of resilience and vulnerability. There are tasteful contributions from Gregoire Maret on harmonica and Graham Hughes on cornet. Technically, Ross is very fine throughout. But it's his acute proportioning of specific details to composition of the whole that makes Costume such an exceptional release and one that grows in stature with each listen.

SCANNER
THE RADIANCE OF A THOUSAND SUNS BURST FORTH AT ONCE
STREAMLINE RECORDINGS CD

BY CHRIS SHARP

So much electronic music is composed in a vacuum; the steady product of hours of silent communion with acoustic software and surreptitiously modified equipment. While there's something addictive about that quest for a purely sonic experience, uncontaminated by any link to the grubby world of everyday life, the results are often too soporific to make any emotional impact on the listener. This is one mistake that Robin Rimbaud aka Scanner has never made. His work has always been a

response to exterior influence, a fractured dialogue with whatever drifts into its path — from his early recordings of intercepted mobile telephone calls to more recent projects involving collaborations with august institutions and untested artists around the world. It's not surprising, then, that a random and striking suggestion should have produced this, one of his most accessible and touching releases.

At the invitation of the bride and groom, the Radiance Of A Thousand Suns... was improvised and recorded in a rural Dutch church last summer as part of their wedding ceremony. Not surprisingly, the music to tender and optimistic in tone, the sonic equivalent of a wistful tear falling in the corner of the eye. "Silent Unspoken Memories" draws on the sonorous cadences of the Baroque devotional tradition, all stately curlicue and warm bass drones, while "Walk Gently Through The World" builds gradually on the kind of languid, twinkling guitar that illuminate Enya's *Avon*. The track takes involves around a simple, spanned string quartet loop that is somewhat

unexpectedly augmented by a dreamy helium vocal line, punctuated in turn from the prelapsarian, MDMA-derived down of the lengths, concluding "And I Shall Love Because Of You" is a warm-blended, meditative drift which bleeds birdsong and church bells with rich organ chords and swelling digital exhalations. On paper it sounds sentimental, but it's delivered with poise and restraint, and so succeeds evenly.

SHINING IN THE KINGDOM OF KITSCH YOU WILL BE A MONSTER

HUME GRAMMOFON CD
BY JOHN GILL

The title to this CD by Norwegian Shining almost outdoes my all-time favourite, Australia's Siab and their album, *Clifford Daring, Please Don't Live in the Past*. Its pre-puberty neither unkindly compares it to early King Crimson, when in fact its more like Charles has let loose with a sampling synthesizer and the strip turned up to 11. The levels of complexity on this recording could be described as a post-punk "Unanswered Question". But expect ear damage.

Dwyer "Gordon Weather Report" had me crying with laughter at its Death Metal riffing, although this is Death Metal with the technique of classic Mahavishnu Orchestra. (There's also a fairly blatant allusion to Led Zeppelin's "Jazz Like You" as well.) Diddy time-saturated jazz rock of the Henry Cow school mixes with electronics, neo-classicism and free jazz in one unholy blizzard of noise. There's also some hambo-dance Dimeola Coleman in here too. As well as live, it's also common to Paul Grobowski's admirable Australian Art Ensemble, pursuing similar postmodern intentions, multi-layered and multi-referenced, and whose version of "We'll Meet Again" (check their CD *Along The Bell Backroads*) is a masterpiece. As well as their sonic assaults, Munkley and his accomplices also create beautiful, almost light-like soundscapes.

The CD closes with a lovely, almost Well-like acoustic squarewave melody, respite after all those roaring electronics. If you ever see them do this shit live, hold on to your seat. When Shining kick off, your heart about to beat.

DAVID SIMONS PRISMATIC HEARING

TEACH CD
BY BRIAN MARLEY

Of the ten diverse pieces on *Prismatic Hearing*, only two share the same instrumentation. That the CD is nonetheless cohesive is due to the characterful nature of David Simons' compositions. He's a longstanding member of two very different ensembles, Music For Homemade Instruments and Garmelton Son Of Linn, both of which play on *Prismatic Hearing*. He's also worked extensively in film, theatre and dance, and the longest piece here, "Pisces/Roskinn", composed in 2003 for BAD Co in Zagreb, Croatia, was written to accompany a dance in which a woman relives her rape in excruciating detail while centering herself in the manner of a Picasso portrait. The source material is, as the title suggests, sampled from Rossini, his Messe Solemnelle, but the music is fractured into new rhythmic and melodic shapes and rendered distinctly ominous, benefiting from Simons's virtuous use of sampling technology.

The earliest of the compositions, written in 1974 while Simons was a student at the California Institute of the Arts, is "Crown Of Thorns", for harpsichord, guitar, harp, cele, vibraphone, marimba and gongs. It plays for a mere 36 seconds. This is the only piece on the CD that's strongly reminiscent of another composer: the Frank Zappa of his most accomplished album, *Uncle Meat*. Most of the other pieces on *Prismatic Hearing* were composed during the 1990s and the current decade, and by then Simons had a sure grasp of his materials and the ends to which they could be put. One of his innovations is to use a sampled sound as itself and as a MIDI controller of thematic sounds. Thematic-sounding samples feature on "Information" and "Dematerialized".

The latter very effectively illustrates how orchestral sounds and voices, modulated electronically, can be shaped into a position that transcends its source materials. During the first couple of minutes the intense drama of the piece is undercut by humour, as interlarded and pitch-bent voices recite phrases such as "I burgundy suede slipper is humping an old dick".

According to Simons, prismatic hearing is the process by which our minds recastulate sounds while we're actively hearing them, filtering them according to our tastes and prejudices, etc. He points out that, in many cases, this "results in a more interesting phrase than the original". Something similar could be argued about his use of sampled material on *Prismatic Hearing*.

OVRO & NIKO SKORPIO LINE IN PLACARD #7

SOME PLACE BLUE CD
BY NICK SOUTHGATE

This album contains the solo and combined contributions of Ovro & Niko Skorpio to the Placard Festival. These festivals are only made available on headphones, either by MP3 or live streams over the Internet, to locations either nearby or remote. On this occasion the performance took place in a Helsinki apartment, convenient for the Finnish artists, with listening slots (the "placards") set up in France, Belgium and Italy. Therefore the conditions of its original performance are entirely replicable at home.

headphone listening greatly heightens awareness of stereo. This is exploited through, pre-eminently by using stereo panning with a regular and absurdly rarely heard since the technique's adoption by the mass market. Likewise, radical separation in each channel is often made consistent with rapid on/off sequences.

Ovro's half develops a more convincing aesthetic with these tools. "The Concrete Echoes", for example, mixes muted thumps and echoes together with haler skeletons of purely electronic and purely synthetic sound. It is the listening to the infrastructure of a building, with wires, pipes, walls and joints consistently conspiring to reach other. Over this, Ovro whispers beard into a child's giggle. It is a piece born to live in the intimacy of the headphones, never taking the listener beyond the space between their ears.

Niko Skorpio's pieces are both more musical and more robust. The closing building sounds on "Oskore", or the Eastern wind rift of "Umbal Dows" or the recognisable guitar and percussive sounds throughout, take our minds to the source of their creation. The standard track, however, takes both artists together on "Drears Which Burn", a telling title for a piece where Ovro's paranoid and seriously soundscapes are buffeted by Niko's acerbically fierce leanings to produce a disturbingly scorched nightmare.

SOUND OF MUCUS FILTH PHARMACY

NORTH WOOD MUSIC CD
BY ANDY HAMILTON

Pauline Keel once blasted *The Sound Of Music*, calling it *The Sound Of Mucus*. Perhaps taking its cue from the eminent film critic, this Swedish track was formed six years ago, with Martin Kichen on reeds and found objects, Herman Winkling on fleecchord and sampler, and Andreas Avelson on percussion and drum machines.

This is their first CD, and a very dirty one it is too. Even familiar instruments are unrecognisable. Kichen on saxophones and baritone saxes doesn't play a pure tone on the whole disc; instead he mostly prefers toneless breathing and vocalising. The fleecchord is a fearless straggled instrument of Herman Winkling's own invention, made from two electric guitars. Stringing and tuning constantly change, and the resulting uncertainty is an inspiration. "Sometimes," he says, "I tune it nice and tempered, but mostly I prefer to let some of the strings to be a bit out of tune. I use all kinds of preparations; saw blades, rubber, metal, drumsticks, wood, plastic, brushes, staves."

The disc consists of eight "Lessons" followed by a "MacFidel Lesson". On "Lesson 1" the percussive sounds like someone shovelling soil in the back yard or rummaging in the garden shed, interspersed to hilarious effect with fragments of Beethoven and Bach from the CD player. "Lesson 1" is a faring display by solo sax, while "Lesson 11" packs into its three minutes insect-like annoyance, more cool-sounding, hints of the furrier, and sounds as ethereal as anything produced by Joe Meek. Sound Of Mucus are trying to liberate these sounds, so this homemade comic improv has a serious purpose — their genius is that these "wasteful" effects don't ever cross as documentary. A tiny disc, with some great sounds to pick your nose by

TAURIS TULA SPARROWS

CLIPPER LP
BY MIKE BARNES

Sparrows was produced using guitars, stringed instruments and voices, and in fact the sedate "November 9" actually sounds like a guitar string — or at least a number of shimmering, scale stands — slowly stretched to the aural horizon.

Practically speaking, this is the sound of Heather Leigh X on voice, pedal steel, psaltery (a zither-like instrument whose origin goes back to ancient times) and cistro (a small Latin American guitar-like instrument), and David Leigh X on guitars and leups. They're better known as Heather Leigh Murray, of Charalambides, Scores and Babes On The Loose, and guitarist David Keenan, know these pages both as writer and musician.

All three pieces were improvised in a single night in 2004 — despite the use of dates in the titles — and convey the vague, mercurial moods and peculiar thoughtfulness that characterise the minds' activities in the early hours. "June 6" has loops hanging in the air like ring bells from some distant, remote locale, punctuated by background clatters and songings. Throughout this track, Heather Leigh's voice is a constant presence, floating through the soundfield in a few endlessly held wordless notes. Not only technically impressive, her singing is haunting and strongly moving. "August 27" is similar but slightly more animated, with glissando pedal steel and ethereal voices circling Keenan's lops. The track exemplifies what makes Sparrows so compulsive — everything sounds like it's coming from a distance, creating a space into which the listener can't help but be drawn.

HÅKON THELIN A PREFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS

ALBURO CD
BY BRIAN MARLEY

Hakon Thelin signals his intentions from the outset. The opening track on the first CD to be released under his own name, is a self-composed pastiche of a late 18th century minuet scored for double bass (Thelin himself), cello, violin and viola, and underscored by clattering, heavily improvised percussion courtesy of Ingar Zach. This mixture of the old and the new, of elements both composed and improvised, governed with humour, is characteristic of what follows. There's even a wild title song situated unerringly at the end of the track containing learned Xenakis's slithering Theraps.

Xenakis's deliciously abstruse Chansons, for double bass and saxophone, is, with Theraps, one of the heavyweight items here, alongside Bert Sørensen's quietly brilliant *The Hill Of The Heartless Giant* and Jacob Duvick's *Volcanos*, for Solo Double Bass. If that were the programme in its entirety, it would be well worth a listen. But the lengthy *Heartbreak Motel*, composed and played by Thelin and Zach — which contains within it an excerpt from David Thelin's a dog named garage — shuffles a small handful of ideas ad nauseum and eventually outstays its welcome. The hidden song which ends the album, about a certain Mr Canike, is a delightful throwaway, but it's not in keeping with what has gone before. Other is a splendid musician, but *A Preference To Other Things* sells him a bit short. □

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Nick Southgate

AARKTICA BLEEDING LIGHT

"I have seen this night before", sings Jon DeRosa at the beginning of the ominously titled opening track "Depression Modern". The fourth Aarktika album deals in a minimalist strain of the momentum of invention and charge that might spark hope. These are soundtracks to the circular moods of depression, a reflection on the personal weight of a New Yorker's life, songs for those who might prefer to go to sleep in a town that never wakes. It is DeRosa's reverbed guitar lines that dominate, harking diaphanous and skeletal throughout each piece. He is accompanied by ex-Anthony Braxton Ensemble members Seth Minterka, Nate Woolley, and Mike Price. Their standout contribution is on the connoisseur's standard of "A Shadow Knife (Draw The Bleeding Night)". DeRosa's interest in Indian music is most evident on the closing "Bleeding Light" where he intones "Come on baby, gonna make it through the night" over a sizzling drone — a desolate backdrop to where he came in.

AMP

VERY FRIENDLY CD

Ten years on from their formal debut, Amp have settled around doc Richard Walker and Karine Chaffr, although throughout this album various previous collaborators and a few new ones join them. US is a largely song based collection, its subject the veiled and veiled "special" relationship as Reddicks enjoy with the former colonies and something explored both literally and as a metaphor for personal relationships. The soundscapes have adapted to the polaric of pointed expression and not mindlessly and transcendently behind Chaffr's dark questions about a level of the line soaked in whiskey and rage. "Opening" proceeds at a build-up, before giving way to the motorik "Get Here". The stand-out track is the layered improvising design of "Endgame", one of two tracks co-composed with Donald Ross-Skinner, best known for his guitar playing with Julian Cope. Expressive in its claustrophobia, propelled by its own density and darkness, it is a paean to a transatlantic specialise.

CRAIN

SPEED
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

Below Grunge ate the world and expired, before and glutinous, its bloated corpse feeding an army of corporate maggots, the post-hardcore scene was a thrilling list of ideas, energy and possibility. Here readers will be familiar with Louisville, Kentucky's cerebral cartoonism in this, in the form of their foremost sons, Sinti. However, like every scene, lost obscurely in the shadows of the shadows of other fellow travellers are heroes unsung but somehow greater. This has been the fate of Crain, whose debut album *Speed*, first issued in 1992 on the Automatic Wreckless label, was never made available beyond its first pressing of

5000 copies.

The CD release adds four tracks to the eight-track basement sessions produced by Steve Allaire. The dynamics required to deliver the post-hardcore rhythms are all present and gloriously correct. "Car Crash Depression" demonstrates the eternal appeal of the bass, then drums, then guitar stop-start rebuild. "Nose" adds the half-spoken, half-sung lyrics over wire-late scowling rhythms, as does the faster-paced "Fuderman". "Ten Miles Of Fiction" sits somewhere between the melodic leanings of Hüsker Dü and the straight-edge push of early Gang. Compared to many scenerio examinations this one is self-evidently worthwhile rather than self-indulgently worthless.

THE CURTAINS VEHICLES OF TRAVEL PHENETIC CD

None of this album's 23 tracks last more than a poppy ten 140 seconds, each one a bright gem of experimental music. Part of an ever-growing conscience of San Francisco musicians who also staff Deerhoof and The Natural Dramatics, The Curtains use scene stalwart Greg Sauter joined by Chris Cohen and Andrew Maxwell. Previous outings have been entirely instrumental, and tracks like the pretty wheezing "A Sudden Prospect", the stumbling sun-dappled processional "Won't Make It" or the hectoring snarl Noah's Ark explosion of "The Bronx Zerkens" continue this tradition. However, this third collection also contains various vocal delights including the charmingly raucous "Fletcher's Favorite" and the sweet playground valdequin of "The Chestnut Kid Returns". The brief, playful, quirky charm of the songs creates a bite-sized version of the Canterbury scene, the medieval feast reworked as a postmodern finger buffet.

DET GAMLA LANDET DET GAMLA LANDET AA CD

Nature and peoples wax and wane with the fortunes of pestilence, war and famine. Families are broken and emboldened by history's manifold blights and blessings. From these the fragments of memory and nostalgia emerge and are patterned into stories and song. Sweden's Det Gamla Landet are master tunesmiths in this tradition. The name means "The Old Country" and these 14 instruments crafted only from banjo, melodeca, guitar and occasional snare drum, evoke the longings of separation, of journeys taken, of returns welcomed, and unresolved absences. "Det Hellige Landet" ("The Holy Land") signs out the promise of final settlement and long rest. All are odds to those who carry their homes in their hearts, or, in the case of "Sjaka Daggen Föll En Snig" (sneaky, "One Liked From A Snake") on their backs.

THE ELECTRIC BUTTERFLIES COLOURFUL WAVES SUPERNICE CD

When Peter Kemmer reinvented himself as Sonic Boom he maybe didn't anticipate the echoes

and reverberations reaching as far as Lime in Peru. Wilder Gertrudes is behind The Electric Butterflies, a one man outpost of cone-rock eclecticism through syntheses and airwaves. Meteorological personalities mean Lima spends half the year under the grava, a mist that rests as soft underbelly upon the city from May onwards. Beneath its Recolletted lies the swelling blood-temperature synth drift of "Hodasod Par El Mar" ("Surrounded By The Sea") makes perfect sense, the vocals whippers of signed content. Equally mesmerizing and amniotic are the sonorous pulses of "Canción De Cura Extramete" ("Song Of The Extraterrestrial Cradle"), a lullaby of suspended animation for those carried by the chariot of the gods from the earthbound mundane to the galactic multiverse.

GREY DATURAS DEAD IN THE WOODS CRASHING JETS CD

If the Maboum's sunshine puts a smile on most of us, this album must be compensated for by the howls of the Grey Daturas, an improvisational instrumental three-piece intent on wiping all that is bright, clean and decent from the sunbaked land and drowning it in a muddy grey in the gape of the Pacific. "Repeat Until Fair" rides leader and banjo, strating and errand in its path. "The Hanging Man Is No Peacock" twists in the wind, Bonnie Mercer's guitar harmonics like cows poking the copse's eyes while the sulcus and snarl drums and bass of Robert McManus and Robert Jayson look on with impassive, unflinching, stark faces. Although they cite The Stooges and Sonic Youth as influences, this is altogether darker.

REEKS & WRECKS KNIFE HITS TUMULT CD

Reeks & Wrecks is US Army slang for "Reconstruction & Reclamation Corps". The name fits. From the boiled bones of backstreet blues and the trashcan rummaging of alleyway R&B emerges the skulking, shuffling soundscapes of Knife Hits. These are sounds that are always playing in a broken down dancehall to lost souls with broken lives. Falttering near light intrudes through thinned doors. The floor jitters with blinks and their dances while the band blast through the raspberry-rude "Free Smoke". Skinny valetudinarian boys peer with lustful suspicion through things as was darts and twist and tease to the let bring of "Dumbbuggy". The evening's passage conquers nerves and frays judgments to form romantic trawler lessons as "Silverthaw" slides in a sad-eyed dawn chorus. Heavy moonbeams of the lives left behind, inner moonbeams of past, present and future regress capturing against each other.

ROTHKO & CAROLINE ROSS A PLACE BETWEEN LO RECORDINGS CD

For London based musician Mark Beazley, bass is still the place. His low work with the low end is supplemented by Caroline Ross's acoustic and

electric guitars, flute, and most importantly her vocals. Blessed with a voice of earnest purity and lullaby softness, she brings humanity to the gravely uninhabited world of Rethko. The steam-steal, spung, intense high-treble bass notes can achieve a persistent motif, evocatively weaved into the cask of a reflective lament like "Divided Lines" or propelled throughout the broken down track song of "Box". Elsewhere it is employed as a soothing, rumbling drone, as omnipresent and inescapable as air or light, sustaining and enveloping everything around it, particularly in the second piece of "The Northern Lights Are Out".

TARENTEL PAPER WHITE TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

BIG BLACK SQUARE
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

Last year's sprawling double CD *We Move* through Weather represented just a fraction of the musical and conceptual scope of these monumental sessions. These tracks add considerably to the San Francisco life's vision. The Paper White EP collects four sparse and open examples of post-rock improvisation. Deener "Islands Straight" starts at a run with an agile bass working against lightning strike guitar harmonics. Before subsiding into a passage or organ and piano chords accompanied only by the hums of amps and distant static of feedback. Two of the other, shorter and untitled tracks play similar varieties of textural waltz, the other spinning more urgently to look at the world from a peak above the fog. The Big Black Square EP is a darker and bolder progression of these themes, an epic 44 minutes of rain-curtain percussion, occasional thunderclaps and growls of a storm, all sketched in the somber green-greys of a water-soaked landscape. Both these EPs are available in combined form on a CD issued on the Human Highway label.

TRACKER BLANKETS FLUNGIRRE CD

Blankets is conceived as a soundtrack to Craig Thompson's graphic novel of the same name. The novel itself has achieved cult status, its simple narrative thread of skanking beds and blankets with family, friends and lovers holding together a coming of age tale that has appeared far beyond the graphic novel's typical audience. The music captures the snowy landscapes of the story's Wisconsin and Michigan settings, from the shimmering and chiming guitar figures that pattern the opening instrumental of "We Were The Trees" through the expansive "Start" as it reflects over epic piano chords, to the least, cold, eerie waltz of "Snow". The album closes with its sole song, the idyllic serenade of "Everything Is Beautiful", angelic pedal steel sloping the past into the future with a gentle supporting hand on the shoulder of youth enlivened and emboldened by experience's early lessons. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

ATOM™

IMIX
LABORATORY INSTITUTE CO

Uwe Schmidt — aka Atom Heart, Señor Coconut, and a host of further aliases — often conceptualizes his diverse projects by putting himself in character. Señor Coconut (represented in photographs with the mustachioed mug of Dandy Jack) is a Latin big band leader down to covers of Kraftwerk and classic rock. Now a forthcoming "compilation" seen Schmidt adopting the multiple personas of Acid House revivalists across the years.

On his IMIX mini-LP, his Atom™ persona morphs to become a sort of digital DJ. Of Schmidt's many styles, from the stunted lounge-Casino version of "Oye Como Va" to the pillow-smothered funk of "Soukally," shunning consistency, the crossleader is the here, here, is the music cuts precariously between Acidic blips and go-go breakdowns, stuttering IDM rhythms and Go-Go cadences wrapped in cheese-dish and ruts.

Unsurprisingly, all the vocals here are either computer-generated or vocoded almost beyond recognition. For Schmidt, the pitch-risk doesn't just hide his true identity, it makes all faces (and voices) possible.

JASON FORREST/END LADIES GET IN FREE

BRONKHO BEARS 12"

Jason Forrest aka Devna Summer jumps on his Praga stick and goes bouncing through a sci-fi wasteland of flailing Metal guitar solos, obsessively perked breakbeats and more irregular time signatures than you'll find in the entire math-rock canon — and that's just on the first track, "Silly High."

"To Each Their Own" does a bleep 'n' drill 'n' bass number on disco and "Song For My Grandmother" sticks a spinner in a player piano, bashing bloody chords until the whole thing goes up in staggering flames staked with yes, more breakbeats. The drums may be a signature Forrest move, but the tune is still one of the best he's ever done. On the B-side, breakcore brains Eric (Charles Pelzer, aka Dogma Marauder) pushes his sampler to oversteering, mashing up 50s percussion records, surf guitar, 40s vocal

groups and further elements that might seem kitschy if they didn't fly by as such a blur. "Laptop A Go Go" sounds a bit like DJ Shadow's "Machin" (On The Motorway), all rattling snares and cool walking basslines; "Applausible Milk Punch" sounds a bit like a drill 'n' bass trackhouse going to town on a cappella quartet; "Parjibit" Merits Beat; despite its title, it's as fresh as Indian as the American canvas — all flash and thrum and cheese — no garish excess in-saves.

KIKI SO EASY TO FORGET REMIXES

BATCH CONTROL 12"

Berlin's Bitch Control label has never shied away from the grandiose — the synthesizers on records by Apparat and Ellen Allier are as swollen and opulent as anything in dance music today. And Kiki, aka Joakim Lys, seems determined to squeeze even more pounds of pressure into every vinyl groove than any of his colleagues have attempted.

"So Easy To Forget" swells with slightly out of tune Acid repetitions, blousy guitar figures, Goth vocals and dissonant, flaring effects. Like Thomas Andersson's "Turn", its gravitational pull is so strong that withstanding it feels, in contrast, like levitation. Cologne's Michi Doppel, aka Anal artist Ads, uses vocoders, Superpitcher-style harmonic cushioning and her own resonant signature, drawn in obnoxious buzz and crystalline bleeps, to light the path to the escape doors that open heavenward.

MOTOR STUKA STUNT/JUNKER

NOXAMUTE 12"

As much as their name sounds like a Pan Sonic or Raster-Noton offshoot, Motor have no affiliations with those camps. Still, while they cut stomping, energy flashback techno, the duo (Bryan Bass and Oliver Gessert, not to be confused with the artist who records as Motor for Audio) appear to have listened closely to both the Finnish and German groups' records. "Stuka Stunt" begins with what might be the heaviest cough of a rocky dot-matrix perker, scurrying it into a massively out-of-phase kickdrum and hi-hat rhythm before unleashing the floodgates with overdriven bass blasts and seasick oscillations.

It's a mean-floor tune, sure, but it's a hell of a lot more apocalyptically inventive than any of the Scandinavian drum tracts with which it will be mixed in a few more tracks.

"Junker" courts the same bleepy electro fetish that drives like The Dog's music, squelching with the abrasive, EBM-inspired accents that distinguish Black Strobe.

PANICO SUBMINIMAL KILL

TRIGER/SH-8 CO

Paris's Triggerkill label has staked its whole career on complicating the question of genre. Under its umbrella, mutant disco, Krautrock and vintage Techno are all gathered as examples of a unified field of experimental dance music. Panico are certainly the most cross-cultural entity to enter into this field.

Presently based in Paris, they are a group of former Chilean punk rockers now crafting subtle dance tracks still informed by awkwardly funny rockers like The Fall and The Gun Club. Just as Maurice Fulton put a disco spin on 11's last album, Christian Vogel leads his production talents to smother Subminimal's bass-heavy grind in layers of feedback and delay, punctuated by needle-nose handclaps and handclapper staccos. Tactic like "Guerra Nuclear," coursing along on low bass repetitions, howls like barely tamed cloud formations, with gaping layers of separation between bass, drums, guitar and effects. Critics may charge that there's nothing new here, that dance-punk has run its course, that it's time for a new retro before. But beyond their unusual backstory, Panico bring enough strangeness, derangement and humour (just listen to the Caribbean treatment they put on standard basement rock in "Make It") to earn their place near the top of the revivalist blasted ranks.

ALEX SMOKE INCOMMUNICADO

SCAM CD

Even the staunchest Technophile may occasionally wonder if A/A dance music isn't reaching a point of diminishing returns, given the glut of by-the-numbers minimalism and Nitrogenation Acid rework released every week. And

then along comes a record like this — and from a relative newcomer at that. Alex Smoke's debut album isn't radical in any way, but it assuredly combines the best elements of House and Techno's many sub-genres into a wonderfully varied, wonderfully flowing whole.

Smoke's talent lies not in his originality, but in his craft — the way he leaves out a melody from a tangle of overlapping arpeggios, or injects a nominally straight four-to-the-floor pulse with just enough erratic energy to make it sound new. Smoke is a sentimentalist — many of his synthesizer songs take on the lush, nostalgic quality of Boomer Of Canada's meeting tones, and on "Chica Weppa," the lead is a dead ringer for Violator-era Depeche Mode. But that knack for timbral inference is a skill in its own right and of a piece with Smoke's larger project: to best his influences by becoming them. Harold Bloom might not like dance music, but he'd have to admire Smoke's record success.

VITALIC OK COWBOY

PRG CD

When Vitalic (François Pascal Arbo) played a pre-Sonar party in Barcelona last summer, he delighted in pushing the sound system well into overdrive (and so did the crowd, whose cheering was directly proportionate to the clipping). Vitalic's debut album OK Cowboy displays more restraint than his in-the-red live appearance, but it's still absolutely enormous, yoking together elements of Dark Funk, Kompakt and EBM-leaning electro-House acts like Black Strobe and Tafelberg to create a sound thrumming with bold analogue synthesizers and beely rock drums.

All of the hallmarks of maximalist dance music are here — Acid squeals that expand like sponges, shimmering harmonics that split the listener down the middle and flanging arpeggios that ride to the soft-lit fantasies of Jean-Michel Jarre. However, it's not all pure bombast: "Reper Machines" features a falsetto vocal that might be sampled from RuPa Kretz, while the queasy intro of "Polanski" somehow manages to span Baroque counterpoint, Reichian minimalism and steel drum/organ hybrids into a dazzling, and dizzying, unity. □

"tra-la-la-la"



THEE SILVER MT. ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA & TRA-LA-LA BAND HORSES IN THE SKY

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OSSIE HIBBERT & THE REVOLUTIONARIES EARTHQUAKE DUB HOT HOT COOL

Steve Bamoo digs deeper with this second release on Hot featuring the relatively unknown (at least outside the Mosonic lodges of reggae) arranger and keyboardist Ossie Hibbert, who should be given more props for his behind-the-scenes work at Channel One and Joe Gibbs. This is Hibbert's debut dub album; he later went on to produce Greg Isaacs's Mr Isaacs set, together with its dub companion Leggo Dub. The title track is taken on Dennis Brown's "Whip Them Jah" using The Royals' "Pick Up The Pieces" rhythm. Other recognisable staple sources include "Black Diamond" from Keith & T's "Stop That Train", "Cello in Dub", "Death Sentence" and "Kissang", all derived from The Abyssinians' "Declaration Of Rights" and "Pain Land Dub" from "Rainy Night In Georgia". There's a clutch of one away riddims here but the majority of the set relies on versions of old riddimsey classics. A clearly built drum and bass-centric affair: the likes of which we don't hear much these days.

MACKA FAT BEHIND THE COUNTER BLACK YARD CO

Force's claim to be the centre of European reggae excellence is furthered by this excellent Dennis Brown-produced effort from Macka Fat, who take their name from Jackie Mitton's vintage Studio One album. The only reggae is the obviously lightweight reggae vocals, albeit improved when delivered in harmony. But this weakness is more than balanced out by the strength of the tunes as well as Bove's arrangements and mixes, which place the sound squarely back in that rich early 80s vein somewhere between Sly & Robbie and the Ledbetter Grove sound of Awood.

TOMMY MCCOOK REAL COOL TROJAN 3XCD

Whether Tommy McCook was actually the leader of the legendary Statisticians who know, but what's certain is that the latter saxophonist McCook was among the most innovative and influential Jamaican musicians during a generation of giants, and was present at recording of many of the foundation tunes of both ska and reggae. Another graduate of Kingstone's Alpha Cottage School, he began by touring with dance bands but would often abscond into the hills to participate in the informal musical gatherings of Count Ossie and the informal collection of the Rasta drummers and chanters who gathered to resist. After The Skatalites burned out, he formed The Supersonics, house band at Duke Reid's Treasure Isle studio, and proceeded to create a series of rhythms that endure to this day on classic hits from artists such as Alton Ellis, Justin Hinds, The Techniques and The Paragons. In the 70s he became an essential component of the interchangeable brass section that drove the militant, jazzy or funky sounds

colouring roots reggae, notably in many classic Bunny Lee, Osbourne, Upsetter and Yabby Yu productions dubbed by King Tubby. This excellent collection concentrates on his rocksteady and reggae sides and together with the Heartbeat set issued a few years ago makes up as definitive an appraisal of this great talent as we could hope for.

PRINCE FAR I & CREATION REBEL MUSICBOX CD SOUNDBOARD 1983

Among all the singers, DJs, vocal groups, musicians and producers of the golden age of roots reggae perhaps the best loved by the UK audience was Prince Far I – not so much a DJ in the classic style, but more a chanter of words. Far I came a long way from Studio One and Joe Gibbs to working with Adrian Sherwood and co, even (on *Cry Tuff Dub Encounter* Chapter II) sharing credits with the likes of David Toop, Steve Beresford and An-Up from The Sits. However, the tunes on this CD-R were recorded live from the soundboard at the Lego club in March in 1983, the year of his death. This illicit piece of reggae history is worth seeking out – the only extant live recording of the DJ is with Sura Of Africa and not really representative of his performances. Backing group Creation Rebel open up with some required platitudes before Far I enters with "Big Fight" (aka "Dreadlocks Versus Babylon"), a jagged commentary delivered over Sura's "Joe Fizzer" rhythm and recorded for Joe Gibbs. That's followed by two On-U Sound staples, "Predigal Son" and "Virgin", the latter delivered straight to the head of Richard Branson. The sound is clear and crisp with a heavy bass return throughout; the Prince's set, which closes with his near-sing-songy style on "What You Gonna Do On Judgement Day", before Creation Rebel return with a mere serene "African Space".

ROOTS UNDERGROUND TRIBESMAN ASSAULT WACKIES CD/LP

Tribesman Assault made a brief appearance a couple of years ago and is back again. It's a reissue from around 1977 collecting Uoy "Buavivake" Barnes's early tunes recorded in Jamaica at a series of studios – Randy's, Black Ark and Treasure Isle – that prompted the building of the House of Wackies back in the Bronx. Included are the rhythm tracks of the African Jamaicans "Girl Of My Dreams" and Tyrone Evans' "Dread Me Mr", as well as versions of "Babylonian Attack" and "The Righteous Flamer". "Wasn't Born To Be Lonely". Roots Underground are basically the early Wackies house group from back in Jamaica. Rockness Breed, who featured the guitar of a certain Jerry Heider: there are nine duets in all, mostly versioning old but lesser known riddims, distinguished by some occasionally outrageous futuristic drumming from John Seely and Johnny Dize. The set closes with the sole vocal, a reading of "Open The Gates" from KC White And The Loveboys.

SLY & ROBBIE'S TAXI SOUND A CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF TAXI RECORDS AURALOX CD/LP

This seems a strange release from Dave Katz and the Auralox people. It only feels like yesterday that Pressure Sounds just cut their ill-fated *Jah* selection. Witness that set started with the Rhythm Tones' most sublime moment, this one ends with it – like it or love it or do anything other than heartily recommend any album that features The Tamlins' version of "Baltimore", the Randy Newman song perhaps best known for Nina Simone's version but taken to another level here. The 12" out has an extended verse before we are hit with that sweetly aching harmony chorus that repeats into the dub together with a brass swell imposed direct from heaven, in stark contrast to the song's bleak message. The rest of the album collects other key outputs from the late 70s and early 80s. General Echo is at his rampant best on "Drunk Master", a salute to the early Jackie Chan kung-fu epic; Junior Delgado's stark depiction of prison life on "Fast Agitation" is spurned on by an equally angry Dennis Brown and although "Revolution" is one of Dennis Brown's most favoured cuts it always preferred the more triumphant "Part 2".

VARIOUS BABYLON: ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK CHRYSLER CD

Collectors, the release of this soundtrack CD heralds the "soon come" appearance of Franco Rosso's film where the music played such a key role. It's only been available over the past few years in feeble, quasi-bootleg versions and another viewing would help to re-evaluate its contribution to the sadly inadequate history of the sound system in UK. The revised album is something of a disappointment, though, especially the Dennis Brown produced films which range from funny little Julie Finnard-driven jammies to pleasant instrumental diversions best described as incidental. Of course, the Yabby Yu and Awood tunes have been revised – even so "Warrior Charge" always manages to stir the blood. But it's Roy's "Wha'up Bop!", a crossover stab at the then fresh street styles of NYC, that emerges with an enhanced reputation. On its first appearance, the album it came from was dismissed by both HipHop and roots fans.

VARIOUS DANCEHALL SESSIONS SESSONS 2XCD

Ian McCann selects a set of juicy dancehall soundtracks from the mid-80s through the following ten years sourced mainly from UK's now defunct Fishion imprint and the good offices of Tubby's Fishion shop Fatman. McCann rarely performs such duties these days – a shame as he always has a very angry on demand. Here, he comes in with a good analysis of dancehall in the stereotyped, a topic worthy of expansion. But back to the tunes, an equal mix of the ruff and righteous, pop and prurience. There's a reminder

of the great lost soul voice of Frankie Paul in his take of Toni Tones's modern R&B classic "Little Water". And how easily the sucker music media dismissed a true original in Shabba Ranks, who delivers a lesson to the youth in "Must A Fi Learn". Topping all is dancehall another "Zig It Up" from Fournier & Miramar, clashing in 1989 on this totally mindless dance exhortation that invites Aaron Neville's once sedate "Hercules" breakfast.

VARIOUS DOWN SANTIC WAY: SANTIC JAMAICAN PRODUCTIONS PRESSURE SOUNDS CD/LP

A belated follow-up to Pressure Sounds' earliest release *An Even Harder Shade Of Black*, featuring the roots rebel productions of Leonard "Santic" Ghs. The album opens with two takes on Pablo's "Polo In Dub", unusual in that the tune originated as an instrumental in the typical doom-lie style created by the foundation melodic player, only to be versed by Horace Andy, who added the lyrics to the new classic "Problems". It's verse is version throughout the set, beginning with first Freddie McKay's vocal version and Santic All Stars dub to Pablo's kung-fu movie track "Nap Ki Do". Then comes Jah Lloyd's great "Ten Shooter", containing the unforgettable line, "Not even the dog that pass against the wall of Babylon shall escape his [Jah's] wrath". The jewel for collectors is Gregory Isaacs as William Shakespeare (sic) on "Late At Night" – proving, in a disarmingly off-kilter delivery, why he was so irresistible. But best of all is the under-recorded Paul Whiteman, aka Paul Blackman, manager of Augustus Pablo, crooning the simple plaint "I Don't Want To Lose You" over a delicate Pablo melodies line. Set to be one of the complements of the year.

VARIOUS ROUGH GUIDE TO DUB WORLD MUSIC NETWORK CD

This is a dub primer sourced from the Blood & Fire catalogue. It makes sense, as together with Peter Dalton, the label's Steve Harris is co-author of the Rough Guide to Reggae, still the best place to find your way through this most tortuous of musical genres. Denaturing proceedings is King Tubby of the Upsetter, student Prince Jammy and Philip, Scratch The Plate, the late (ED) Thompson and Crucial Bunny from Channel One. The only fresh track on the set is alone worth the price of entry: "Behold A Dub" by Amanda All Stars and King Tubby is from a Larry Black & White Marshall production and has Tubby in one of his more vicious moods – he obviously kicked the dog on the way out that morning. "Noah Sugar Pan" is probably the most lascivious dub squeaked out by The Upsetter from the magnificent Grooves – soon to return to Blood & Fire with a brand new album "General Version" is Jahmy's brutal story of Dennis Brown's "Went To Be His Own General" and there are top contributions from Yabby Yu, Glen Brown and Keith Hudson. A great tool for converting dub heathens. □

Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

BEVEDERE MOUNTAIN EXPRESS THROUGH SULPH'ROUS NIGHT PAGONEHOUSE CD

Operating through their own Pagonhouse label, Bevedere Mountain Express are an unassuming duo comprising Howard Goodman as an unassuming of programming and production, who also writes most of the music, and lyricist Veleo Gable on occasional vocals. The sequel to their 2003 debut, *A View in the Blue Bellow*, is a gently inventive collection of melodies, scattered percussion and occasional samples lifted from Eastern European films and shortwave broadcasts. The inclusion of live cassettes on "Where the White Mulberry Tree Grows" and field birds on "The Town Beneath the Sea" indicates a talent for sensitive phonographic excursions.

BITSTREAM DOMESTIC ECONOMY 7 MODERN LIVING CD

You know something's wrong when the first proper album from brothers Steve and Dave Conner under their Bitstream alias is actually shorter than an earlier CD collection of past 12" tracks. Despite their gestures towards household efficiency and clean minimalist luxury, the Conner boys don't sound like they throw very much away. The law of averages means that when it works, as on the fractured pulsating "Bass Lobe", the scraggly Acid beats of "Orange Room" and the magnificently garbled "Skymon", there's plenty to enjoy. When it doesn't, however, all you're left with is plenty, which is also a pity as of saying "more than enough".

CHRIS BOCAST THROUGH THE AIRLOCK OVERBRIGHT ARTS CD

With titles like "Chained Ruler Daring", "Ice Cauldron" and "Cold Sleep", it's clear that this collection of Ambient space pieces from the lead guitarist of Colorado group Boicodance is more concerned with the inhospitable depths that he beyond the airlock door than the cozy confines that it helps to protect. Drawing upon heavily modified guitar effects, piano, Moog and E-bow, Bocast invokes measureless distance, nammine configurations and impassive bodies moving at

their own unreadable speeds. Unable to match so vast a scale, it feels as if no human hand could ever have laid a place here, except that humanity's fingerprints are all over everything.

BUILD BUILDINGS THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH MY TAPE RECORDER BUILD BUILDINGS CD

For those who find the delicate perpetual clutter of this world too fascinating for words, Brooklyn based musician, scientist and physiologist Ben Tweel has created a cycle of songs without vocals that may well be worthy of your attention.

Using rhythms painstakingly assembled from household sounds, customised drum patches and random intrusions, he creates music to accompany the slow accumulation of dust in corners, the passage of clouds across windows and the gentle exorisms of the coffee-maker working away in the kitchen. The way Tweel's pieces avoid the proliferation of such tiny elements without complaint or comment should make it recommended listening for audiophiles everywhere.

CEX STARSHIP GALACTICA TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

Originally released in such minute quantities by the UK's 555 Recordings label and in a warespinner paper cover guaranteed to fall away into the ravages of time, Ryan Kidwell's second album marked his radical transition from the saucy laptop twanks of his *Roll Model* debut on Kid606's Tigerbeat6 label to the snotty B-boy pop genius of his 2003 *Beung Ridden* project. So what you get the second time around is the elegant threading of HipHop beats with light-fingered acoustic guitars on "Get in It Squared", the sophisticated harmony but great guitar action of "Hi Scores", plus saucy instrumentalists like "Can Can Kiss My Soft Sensuous Lips" and the blunted Commodore 64 madness of the title track.

This album also comes with three remastered bonus tracks, removed to be the earliest songs composed on the Cex computer way back in 1996.

ELECTRONICAT VOODOO MAN OSIRO B CD

"You need Flash." Fred Bight repeats over and over on the chorus to "Flash And Accessories", reminding us in this apparent plug for a household cleaner of the sound linguistic reasons why the French can't do rock. Well, not with a straight face anyway. Meanwhile, the drum machines, shimmering psychobilly guitars and vast affectations of Electronicat's previous album for Disko B, *21st Century Joy*, are all still in place. Bight also gets severe props for his John Zacherley impersonation during the middle eight of "Daisies Les Bois", which is actually about wearing leopard skin and being lost in the jungle. Alive or dead, Poison Ivy and Lux Interior would be spinning in their graves.

GAVOUNA STINGS AND DUM MACHINES ANALISE CD

Hard not to imagine a few peaceful Sunday afternoons spent curled up with the sequel to Athens-born installation artist Athanasios Agriarinos's first release under his Gavouna alias – the 2003 Warm Industry EP for Manchester's Melodic label. Under cover of Konrad Köhler's study array of strings, Agriarinos creates illusory acoustic variations on the basic Techno template: check out the confidently regulated bass running through the closing moments of "Three" or the stately glissandi built into the instrumental ballad "Italians (1939)". At times the subtle intricacies and subtle tempo of tracks like "Leo & Lydia" and "Tejeyor" recall HomeLife, but generally Agriarinos's compositions display an artistry all their own.

TOMOROH HIDARI THE NECROPHONICON ISOLATE CD

Relinquishing the mythic seepage emanating from HP Lovecraft's fictional universes with openers "Miss Chulini 1984" and "Jactantia Ballet", Viennese composer Oliver Stammer gives way to his dark imaginings as 'decomposer' Tomoroh Hidari. Helping him out are various voices of the dead including German-language rapper Kamp MC on the belligerently liveform "Rae De La Gack".

Kirstine Fogg's dislocated vocalism, locked in with some classic electronic samples on "Miss Bennett" and the resolute technological backbeat of "Bottle For The 10th Planet". Stammer shows considerable diversity and inventiveness in his approach, creating phonic effects that are more quick than dead.

KODA MOVEMENTS INFORMATION CD

The trick to this one is to bypass all tendencies towards queerness and stillness that the basic imagery and titles with which M Demick's first album for Dink's Infraction label has been presented and crack the volume up. A short series of singledrained meditations on a single cluster of tones, their overlapping, phasing and resonating waves better, conveying a deeper sensation of peace the louder they get. The sustained chiming and blurring that occurs on each piece, producing an increasing sense of depth and shadow as they proceed, gives physical presence to suspension, allowing listeners to assume the form that suits it best.

PASTACAS TSACA TSAP KOHREIL CD

Singing in a blend of native Estonian, Finnish and his own private language, Ramo Teder has recorded an album of remarkable calm and invention. Deftly textured vocals and nimble guitars fragment gently and then recombine into delicate shapes and patterns. Teder does not so much write songs as capture an array of fleeting moments. A track like "Kutkad" can suddenly fly apart into random keyboard runs; "Reel Vivaldi" rehearses its effects at different speeds; "Vintikon Kupong" treats its harmonies and contrapuntal bassline with offhand mischief.

The majority of these pieces, which fit neatly into the collection's 44 minute 44 second running time, were recorded in the tiny village of Kõrkjala, on Finland's west coast, where the mornings are exactly 33 minutes and 33 seconds longer than in the rest of the world. So now we know what some of them do with all that extra time. □

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Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

STEVEN FELD THE TIME OF BELLS 2: SOUNDSCAPES OF FINLAND, NORWAY, ITALY & GREECE VORLOK CD

As an ethnographer, Steven Feld's best known fieldwork has centered on the melodic weeping of tribesmen from Papua New Guinea; published as collections such as *Voices Of The Rainforest* (303+/Rhodes) and the commanding triple disc *Bosoni* (Smithsonian Folkways), his findings enticed musicologists and Deadheads alike. Of late, Feld's ear has been attracted by metallophones, often those peeling over the European countryside. In the wake of the Smithsonian he created to accompany Bright Balkan Morning (a study of music in Greek Macedonia) and the initial Time Of Bells recordings from France, Finland and Greece, comes a second volume.

This time out, Feld investigates the carillon of a Finnish cathedral along with other accompanied by handbells. The sounds of the staple bells are seated in the context of their landscape, birdsong and ambient mellowness being much in evidence. Similar bells from a Norwegian cathedral segue into a slightly shambling brass band performance overtopping in turn with an open air EU set. Costumed bellringers from an Italian village then chime alongside zampogna bagpipers. Rounding out this installment, the favored participants of a goat dance on the Greek island of Sykos hold their own in volume against HipHop beats leaping from a neighbouring club; the recordist takes brief respite in a neighbourhood bar, and finds soulful rebetika stylings, which wind up here as well.

ALI AHMED HUSSAIN & JAGAL NAG JUGALBANDI - SITAR & SHEHNAI DUET RHYME CD

Thanks to the efforts of Ustad Bismillah Khan in the mid-20th century the double-reed shehnai migrated from its traditional perch over the entryways to temples and entered India's classical canon as a respectable interpreter of ragas. Only one other exponent of that instrument can be seriously considered a successor to Bismillah Khan, and that's the woefully under-recorded Ustad Ali Ahmed Hussain Khan. Of the latter's few available discs, both limited availability and eccentric production techniques have hindered wider knowledge of his talent. Jugalbhandi presents Ali Ahmed Hussain in duet with sitar Master Nag, both men shining throughout these explorations of a single late night raga captured in a pristine recording of a 1998 concert in Lawrence, Kansas, the former stomping ground of Beat artist William S. Burroughs. The sitar's sticky harmonics are notably transparent and crystalline here, the perfect foil for Ali Ahmed Hussain's penetrating tones. The latter's breath control is worthy of marvel in itself. Among Hussain's signature touches is his exhausting sustain of a single note at the coda of a complex passage; invariably due to that note's termination, on the pale cusp

of audibility, Hussain will be a bow on the package with a brief, carefully tempered burst of ornamentation. This device never fails to impress. One could imagine Hussain only making a more galvanizing impact by spurring lighter fluid on the shehnai and torching it. He is that good.

MUSTAFA KANDIRALI HOW TO MAKE YOUR HUSBAND A SULTAN: BELLYDANCE WITH ÖZEL TÜRKBAS TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS CD

Producer and label proprietor Harold Hagopian has been careful to balance archival treasures of Turkish and Armenian music with new releases on his altogether splendid Traditional Crossroads label. On its surface a seemingly good example of the former, *How To Make Your Husband A Sultan* introduced a stellar 1960s ensemble led by dancer/instigator Mustafa Kandirali to American audiences in an instructional package designed to enhance, as Hagopian notes, "that swing an exotic, the art of domestic seduction." To this end, step-by-step sequential photographs - also reproduced in the CD booklet - enlightened housewives to the subtleties of belly dance and finger cymbal accompaniment, as practiced by the comely Özel Türkbas. Through the sinuous woodland solos introducing several selections justify the price of admission as themselves, the band overall exhibit a light touch and intuitive interplay which transcended considerations of timeliness. The 17 minute rika shari opus "Ön's Deme Musi" shows the group to best advantage, as Kandirali and company progress through the increasingly frenetic moods of a complete dance routine. Played in some 160,000 American households at the time of its initial release, the pastoral selection probably outlasted with tissue and a cigarette.

EMELINE MICHEL RAISIN KREYOL TIMES SQUARE CD

Haiti's Emeline Michel reaches well beyond her country of her homeland, and creates a personal, pan-Caribbean statement over the dozen tracks of *Raisin Kreol*. Though her forays into reggae feel less assured, this hastily compromised her otherwise successful fusion of Antillean beguine and other island flavors within a studio-intensive presentation. Given her ambition to connect click pop from raucous Africanist bawling, Michel comes to resemble an equatorial relative of Israel's Miki Doria. Her commanding vocal range is further enhanced by multitracking, fortunately, whenever production finesse threatens to undermine her musical credo, a rhythm semiotics of congas and tin drums provides a lovable reminder of the earthiness central to her song craft. One misses the oomah and drive of Coupé Cloué, a group which embodied an earlier era of Haiti's music, but is nonetheless glad for another contribution from an important and often overlooked region, whose economic woes are in inverse proportion to its artistic worth.

MANUEL GUAJIRO MIRABAL BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB PRESENTS MANUEL GUAJIRO MIRABAL WORLD CIRCUIT CD

The latest entry in the Buena Vista franchise is an enumerable solo effort by the group's trumpeter, Manuel Guajiro Mirabal. The solo artist designation for the author of this tribute to legendary innovative Cuban bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez is questionable only in that Mirabal's renditions of "Yani Bailar El Montuno" so closely resemble the original recordings that one suspects the hand of Rodríguez reaching from below the grave to direct the current proceedings in Havana's Egen Studios. The joking similarities between old and new are underscored by the recent appearance of a storming collection of original Rodríguez cuts, *El Rey Del San Martino* (Rico). As cited in John Strain Robert's *The Latin Edge*, Rodríguez was credited with importing mambo rhythms from Congolese-derived religious sects in Cuba. Mirabal's stunning performances reflect the same African influence that Rodríguez brought to bear, first within his native island and then as groups influenced by his 1950 move to New York, where Rodríguez compositions are still staples of current salsa repertoire.

Musical, along with many of the key players from the Buena Vista sessions (among them "Cachamo" Lopez, whose eponymous solo disc was as forward-looking as Mirabal's is rooted in the past), recaptures the bonhomie and verve that endeared this son montuno style to all within earshot. That, coupled with any appearance by Cuba's premier solo guitarist, Manuel Galbán (last heard in duet with Buena Vista producer Ry Cooder on *Mambo Sinuoso*), is a spur to joy.

ALI FARKA TOURÉ RED & GREEN WORLD NETWORK CD

The sixth of a string of albums first issued in Europe, Red was responsible for generating interest in the blues-inflected guitar playing and songs of Mali's Ali Farka Touré as the BGS began. Now remastered and issued in tandem with another long-unavailable album, 1988's *Green* (both discs evidently named for the colour of their original sleeves), it showcases a considerable development and sophistication in Touré's art, despite both records containing sporadic arrangements for acoustic guitar and calabash percussion. The signature guitar figure introduced on the classic *Melons "My Girl"* provides the generative stem cells for *La Orologie*, which leads off *Red*, the construction and release of tension intricate to that famous phrase echoes through the rest of the album as well. Both albums equal the sacred intensity of Touré's later electric collections, such as his 1999 studio effort, *Wakouli*, and the Islamic ornamented melodies of both are cut from the same cloth as the material from his earlier live releases, selected tracks from the latter comprising 1996's archival *Radio Mali*. As the singer/guitarist has effectively retired from recording and concert

performance, these final entries in his discography, bluesy and irresistibly swinging, are doubly welcomed.

VARIOUS THE ROUGH GUIDE TO BOOGALOO WORLD MUSIC NETWORK CD

Though slightly lacking the all-killer no-filler punch of 1997's *Dave Muste-curated We Got Latin Soul* (Cahenta/Cherry), this most recent effort to chronicle late 60s Latin pop is equally comprehensive and necessary. As compiled by Sue Steward, UK salsa maven (and co-founder of *Coshiba magazine*), *The Rough Guide To Boogaloo* shares several artists, but only one track (José Cuba's "Oh Yeah") with that earlier album. On both collections, the same characteristics abound: traditional Latin rhythms infused with the energy of then-current R&B and psychedelic-rock, lyrics often sung in English, to-be-remembered dance sections. A comparatively brief though efficacious movement, boogaloo gave Hispanic teenagers their own sound, giving rise to numerous dance crazes and, ultimately, the beginnings of salsa as it is known today. Core performers, such as Ray Barreto, Tito Puente or Willie Colón, refracted pop culture through a Latin prism; Barreto's "A Deeper Shade Of Soul" lent much-needed funk to Procul Harum's hit, and also the Gilberto Sotelo with "My Young Rascals," "Good Lovin'" and Bobby Valentín scored with a loose-limbed reinterpretation of the theme from television's *Batman*. Throughout, cowbells, bongos and vibraphones define the ambience of good times, as probably seemed endless prior to the music's eclipse in the early 70s.

VARIOUS THE SPANISH RECORDINGS: BASQUE COUNTRY: NAVARRE ROUNDER SELECT CD

One of a pair of discs collecting Alan Lomax's recordings made in 1952, during which time the indefatigable Lomax taped musical styles even then exporting from the Spanish-French border region. Down through history, the Basque country has served as a thoroughway to the Iberian Peninsula, it has also been the preferred access for invaders during several ages, with the resulting enrichment of local culture providing some compensation for being repeatedly overrun. The tapes Lomax made in the face of interference from the Franco regime contained both traditional (improved versions of songs in public), gets names and other senses of archaic origin, often with irregular meters, performed at a leisurely pace. Instrumental looting could include rudimentary recorders, the close like dulciana and the distaste accentuation often as *trikoto*. Those familiar with Tony Garland's feature films containing gypsy musicians, such as *Wings* or *Gypsy* *Dance* will want to the piercing vocals and rousing performances captured here. The lyrics, sung by musicians of the Navarre region are a varied lot, and include a spot of self-declared feminism: "There is nothing more beautiful for me/beautiful little flower, beautiful shoe/Fine ankle..."


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Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

JIM BAKER MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

The solo debuts by Chicago pianist/synthseer Jim Baker, previously heard in contexts ranging from Third Stream with Guillermo Granger, via Ken Vandermark's groups, to rock collaborations. These freely improvised solo pieces — he plays piano on all but the three tracks for "Anxiety" ARP 2600 analogue synthesizer — were intended to have a "somewhat or somehow tender" character. "Watching The Interstate" and "Post Industrial Societies And Their Precursor" are very free-flowing and tactile; in contrast, while not exactly bluesy and swinging, "Is It Still Mine If They're Dead?" and "Billed Deadpan" refer to those traditional virtues. On piano, the results are dark, evoked and quietly compelling. The three pieces for synth are quite different — spicy, cool-futurist, exploring the aural possibilities of the instrument.

FIERNYSN FIERNYSN FIERNYSN FIERNYSN NINTH WORLD MUSIC CD

Fiernysn Fiernysn, founded in Copenhagen in 2001, are Andreas Föhner and Tobias Fagbjørn on guitars, Jens Lund on saxes and Torkel Tebbe Mortensen on drums and electronics. With roots in free jazz, avant rock, noise and drone, their debut, they say, features "supersounding rock 'n' roll guitar riffs pounding to the skies at 100 mph and melodic contemporary dance music". Tracks are simply numbered "Nr 1" to "Nr 11". There's melodic atonality and sometimes on top of the pounding riffs, though the quiet plangency of "Nr 4" for sax/guitar duet allows Lund to lose a bit from squalls of overblowing. Very stimulating.

JONATHAN GEE/ DANILO GALLO/ ALESSANDRO MINETTO THE CREAM OF MANDARINS ARTESUONO CD

British pianist and composer Gee, with Gallo on bass and Minetto on drums, recorded this fine album in a studio in Udine, Italy. Gee is intensely melodic, a real improviser not a pattern player, who deserves the epithet "The English Keith Jarrett" because of the similarities in soundworld

and influences from outside jazz tradition. He improves more rationally, though, like Thelonious Monk. His rhythmic and lyrical signature is so strong, he makes compositions by others sound his own just as Monk did. "Cristiana", for instance, sounds like a Gee original, though it's in fact by drummer Minetto. "Velvet Cloud" and "Whistone", like all Gee's compositions, are more than a set of blowing changes, and have a strong motive identity the two as loose but together, and follow the traditional three minute track length — not a note is wasted. This is probably Gee's finest disc to date.

TORD GUSTAVSEN THE GROUND ECM CD

Following up the excellent 2003 debut *Changing Places*, the Norwegian pianist again delivers melancholy, even funeral music in the company of bassist Harald Johnsen and Supersound drummer Jørn Ingebrigtsen. He describes his pieces as often like "wordless hymns", growing out of blues or gospel tradition, and there's a kinship with Keith Jarrett's *Lyndora*, though without the rhythmic exuberance. It doesn't sound like Gustavsen is working up a sweat on what is a very focused recording — haunting, atmospheric and austere beautiful Ambient jazz.

FRED HESS CROSSED PATHS TASPESTRY CD

Recorded in Denver, Colorado, but as hot (and cool) as anything from more established centres, this two-ton, bass and drums set is the latest in a mystery series by tenorist Fred Hess. Born 1944 in Rochester, New York, he studied with Phil Woods, Gunther Schuller and Lou Hannon, and has been a well-kept secret on West for too long. *Crossed Paths* is his second release with Ron Miles (trumpet), Ken Filiano (bass) and the great Matt Wilson (drums), following last year's excellent *The Long And Short Of It* (also on Taspestry). The lack of chordal instrument has obvious echoes of Ornette Coleman, and intimate ensemble interaction and quirky themes, all by the leader, are hallmarks. Hess has a snappy tenor style, but for someone at the

freer end of jazz, his tone is beautiful, the model Lester Young. He's reminiscent of Wayne Marsh in his virtuosity in the alto saxophone register, and his love of counterpoint with trumpet. While Hess's flurries float very free of the beat, avoiding traditional emphases on groove and blue notes, trumpeter Ron Miles is more in the pocket but equally impressive. Hess's brevity often left me wanting more; he's succored on "Rainhouse", a leftfield blues, but stretches out on "Kissin' For Tom". From his photo you'd guess he was an accountant, but Hess is a real jazz — and I think a great one.

JOHN STEVENS/ TREVOR WAITS/ BARRY GUY MINING THE SEAM: THE REST OF THE SPOTLIGHT SESSIONS HWNBD CD

The follow up to *No Fear*, from the same 1977 sessions on Spotify and reissued on CD on the same label in 2002. British drummer John Stevens was one of improv's real thinkers and teachers, who coined the term "freebop" to refer to his development of the "time no changes" approach of Miles Davis's later 60s groups. This freebop has the power and fury of free improv laid mostly over a groove. With Barry Guy on bass and Trevor Watts on alto, compositions are by Stevens and Watts. From the opening alternative take of "No Fear", this is full-on playing, passionate in its intensity. Double bass is one of a few instruments in which mastery is possible across improv and composed music, and Barry Guy is a real virtuoso in both — he's all over the instrument, and in many ways is the most outstanding soloist.

TRIO X: JOE MCPHEE/ DOMINIC DUALV/JAY ROSEN THE SUGAR HILL SUITE CMP CD

In one sense a characteristic CMP release by Joe McPhee's very fine, long-established trio with Dominic Dualv on bass and Jay Rosen on drums, *Sugar Hill* is unusual both for its material and its melodic interest and reference to grooves. It's also another example of the multi-instrumentalist husbanding his resources — here

he just sticks to tenor sax. Duke Ellington's "Drop Me Off In Harlem" and Freddie Hubbard's "Little Surfsway" are both unexpected titles, and while the first is fairly, the latter gives a surprisingly digg-like reading. The two symbiots, "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child" and "Gee! Heine", are staples of the saxophonist's repertoire and each receives a haunting interpretation.

TWO SOUNDS ENSEMBLE INVERSIONS ENNOCKEN CD

The duo TSE is Stefan Weistrand on tenor and soprano saxes and Joakim Simonsson on piano, and came into existence in 2002 with the idea of playing jazz standards. But pure improvisation took over and they "always begin in the unmade and concluded in the unfinished", as the sleeve nicely puts it. The approach is melodic, mostly unobtrusive and in a free ad lib tempo — the piano takes a bright and the recording well projected.

YO MILES! UPRIVER GUNFIRE/NUKE EXCD

Less curatorial and problematic than Branford Marsalis's acoustical *A Love Supreme*, Upriver is the second Canforce release by Yo Miles!, formed by guitarist Henry Kaiser and trumpeter Leo Smith in 1998 to explore Miles Davis's mid-70s electric music. Here they've assembled an all-star cast with Mike Kennedy and Chris Mur on electric guitars, Michael Manning on bass, Steve Smith on drums, Karl Perazzo on percussion, Greg Ostry and John Tchicox on saxes, and Tom Coster on keyboards, plus on some tracks, Zakir Hussain on tabla, Dave Creemer on guitar, and the RIVA Sax Quartet. Upriver has a gruff edge but then *Six Savants*, through Greg Ostry, also added, provides a cooler look. In addition to Miles Davis pieces such as "Bitches Brew" and "Agharta", there's an original Smith composition and a group improvisation. On "Agharta Funk", tenorist John Tchicox duels with the trumpeter — there's more group interaction than on the originals — while on "Isotriumph", Smith shows his Miles antecedents with some muted licks. A fine tribute to Miles Davis's "funk cocktail", beautifully recorded. □

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Outer Limits

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

COH 0393/POST-POP MISD 2002

COH is Russian electronic musician Ivan Pavlov whose attitude leans more towards the Russian avant-garde than Western rock and pop. That said, there's a lot of rocking and popping in evidence on this double disc set, as well as a contagious sense of fun. Disc A (03) is made up of a live mix of new recordings, which Pavlov originally planned to release as his next studio album. Recorded partly in Austria in 2003, the set opens with "Da Kota Rag", a blatted thrashing of electronic winks and glitched robot-hum when the voice of Miss Farrow — as heard on Krzysztof Komeda's title theme for Roman Polanski's 60s Samsara shocker *Rosemary's Baby* — drifts in and out of focus. Further along, "Ultimate Smash Hit" rambles out of the speakers like a spicier Perry and Kingsey synthesized pop anthem that later evolves into a total Techno stamp before returning to Farrow's haunting lullaby. Disc B (57) is a release of COH's first release, which was originally issued in an edition of seven copies and given to friends. It offers a rare opportunity to hear Pavlov at his rawest, and discover how his early minimalist approach to electronic music has progressed without losing any of the humour and wiffling obscurity that make it special.

SETH CUETT MY OWN THOUSAND SHATTERINGS SEDIMENTAL CD

The third track of this work by New York installation artist Seth Cuett is a field recording of a violent thunderstorm, complete with flashes of forked lightning and leaving rain. Its cooling and somewhat frightening sound surrounds the listener, clearing in on him as the full fury of the elements crash down. Rain — and Cuett's obsession with rain — is the main driving force behind *My Own Thousand Shatterings*, which includes two deep listening styled tracks influenced by his storm recording, intended to be played loud enough to bring the ceiling down, the two pieces begin to expand and fill the room after a strong sense of being unable to move takes over. Cuett's reverberating drones are dramatic, powerful and at one with nature.

COC OSP LABCOLIPATION #2 PARAMORSE CD

German performance and sound artist CoCasparyn (aka COC OSP) uses metal, light and poetry to create his impressive and unsettling theatrical noise creations. By digitally processing concrete tones, metallic sounds (made on his own "clank tools") and spoken word, COC uses primitive and technological means to create hellish soundscapes that take the imagination like a white hot brand. Like Coil at their peak, COC has the power to prise open magical doors of perception and let his audience peek through

into other worlds. The OSP part of his name stands for Ours/Sound/Projects which acts a visual element to his sound installations. Although the COC only ever hints at what these might be, this compilation of various works from 1998 to 2003 provides ample inspiration to let the cortex reeling.

CULVER-COURTIS CULVER-COURTIS RIOT SEASON LP

Originally released in 1997 by UK/European independent labels Matching Head, FDR and Capert, this meeting — "dedicated to distance and perception" — between UK Noise musician Court (aka Lisa Stokoe) and Reynold Alan Curtis has now been thoughtfully reissued on clear vinyl by Riot Season. Its four tracks of brooding electronic embrace and guitar hum lure the listener inside a sound environment that is the equivalent of taking a tour around a haunted and haunted. Ominous rhythms glow and moan while somewhere in the distance a furnace is continually stoked. Culver-Courtis's collaboration has retained its unsettling power to disturb and awe.

DEAD MACHINES HUMAN BRAIN WASTING SYNDROME ECSTATIC PEACE LP

The bad brains behind *Dead Machines* belong to John Olson of Wolf Eyes and Tovey O'Rourke of Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice, two very individual voices that resound throughout this latest project even as they work in perfect, albeit disjointed, harmony after a series of releases on Olson's American Tapes label. *Dead Machines' LP* debut for Ecstatic Peace is roughly housed between two pieces of computer card with colour sensitive tape latched on to them. This hands-on effort in the genres of Human Brain Wasting Syndrome, two long tracks of subterranean electronic serenity, which sounds like the outer beam of a nuclear submarine being broadcast from the depths of a Transylvanian forest. UFOs, giant bats, squealing hogs and werewolves also move subliminally through this mysterious work, which burrows ever deeper into the crevices of Olson's and O'Rourke's collective creative psyche to unearth forgotten nightmares.

ELECTROPHILIA BLACK NOISE PRACTITIONER BRIALUPOCOPHIA TONALUS SLP

Feedback feeds Stephen Perrino and Jutta Kuehler, two artists who live and work in New York City, unleash four sides of their combined improvised guitar grind "in noise on the world with a record that claims to be influenced" by Lou Reed's *Meta Machine Music*, experiments, Merbow, Albert Ayler and primal Strokes. Add to that the more extreme examples of New York's 80s No Wave scene, an early ephippia (or dream?) after seeing *The Grateful Dead* play three hours of feedback and a suggested visual attraction to Robert De Grimois's snapper Process Church, and Electrophilia suddenly start

making sense. *Black Noise Practitioner* is abstract noise music distilled down to the raw nerve endings. Although hardly revolutionary, it at least fulfils the duo's ambition of getting an impressive looking double album onto the streets. Helped along by (among others) Christopher Pothol from Henry For Peto and Gang Gang Dance/Angelblood Nessel's Luzz Beugates, Electrophilia's newness, sometimes stunning blur of industrialised cacophony is a welcome addition to NYC's morphing underground rock scene.

MERZBOW 1633 GRU/OF LP

Japanese Noise maestro Merzbow is the latest contributor to German art/music label En/Of's ongoing project integrating an LP of music and an art multiple from an invited musician and artist. Presented in a generic gaudy sleeve in an edition of 100 copies, the En/Of catalogue belongs more to the art gallery than the record store and as a result they are somewhat expensive. But Merzbow's 1633 offering is well worth the investment, as he continues to mine a newly discovered rich seam of digital noise textures. Some of these are more recognisable as they suddenly erupt out of his volcanic sound collage, the main one here being a rock 'n' roll drum kit that acts as the central focus for the record's B-side. Looking into a sample that creates the illusion of a tone arm playing the cut-off groove of a record, the imagery stylus suddenly slides into an undercurrent of high pitched electronic squealing, low rumbling transmissions and Black Metal backward masking technique where demonic sibilant whispers can be heard hissing in the boiling depths of the mix.

Making up the other half of the set, *Merzbow* is an art/Kendall Goes that is a spirit that The Electronic Revolution, the perfectly apt accompaniment to cushion the deadly impact of Merzbow's storm of broken glass, ruptured metal and shattered vinyl.

MOUTHS LOAM ECSTATIC PEACE LP

Noises are Brooklyn based guitarist Brian Sullivan and drummer Nate Nelson, whose distorted psychedelic guitar thrash and topological skin pounding is a post-No Wave breeding of the senses that echoes the primitive live recordings of Mars. Just exactly what is being uttered on "Must Anubis" is hard to decipher through the smog of sonic sludge that surrounds it. But it is, of course, not words, that are important here. Mouths use vocals as an extension of their broken music, a spirit to support the fragile bits and bobs that sound like they're about to fall any second. "Itaz" and "Sheep Out" are Laramie's ugliest highlights, where a glorious beast of electric guitar, shredding, ornamented with vibrant pulses of VU decoupled feedback, sears over a muted trash can drum solo, before falling into a Wolf Eyes-style quadrangle of ripped electronics, blooded

guitar clawing and stubby fingered B movie organ drone.

ORGANUM ZEV TCCSIN-8 THRU +2 DE STADT CD

A taste of what these two important sound artists could do when they got together was revealed an last year's *Tenants vs For Touch*. Here Organum (aka David Jackman) and ZEV meet again to lay down a set of tracks played on the studio's historic grand piano and stainless steel percussion. These were then taken home and individually worked on to produce two distinctively different new pieces. They range from metallic deep space drones to punctured piano poundings that soon get caught up in the whirling blades of the duo's multi-layered machine music. Although the majority of the mixes included are impressive, they are also cold and distant, and it isn't until the piano is belived that a feeling of human contact returns.

PSI BLACK AMERICAN FLAG EVOLVED CD

PSI are a top performing Jaime Fennelly on electronics, Chris Forsyth on guitar and drummer Fritz Welch, who also scrapes cymbals and shuffles objects around on the two tracks presented here. "Headfirst Into The Flames" is a carefully prepared sound construction that swerves from the hardly audible to blaring feedback onslaught in the blink of an eye, only to shut down into near silence. The longer, more involved "May Day" follows a similar approach, only now the silences are pitted with more sonic detail from Fennelly and Welch, while Forsyth's guitar snarls in a corner like a half-starved junkyard dog, for their ability to come across sounding like a punk rock version of AMM, Black American Flag deserves saluting.

MAJIA SK RATKIE & LASSE MARHAUG MUSIC FOR FAKING CNR CD

After their previous *Music For Shopping and Music For Loving collaborations*, Norwegian noise impresarios Majia SK Ratkijev from Spunk and Lasse Marhaug of Jazzsummer fame return with a third collection of incredibly strange sounds and fractured, chaotic sampling. *Music For Faking* is the equivalent of carelessly tossing a lighted match into an open box of cheap Korean fireworks. It goes off with a bang and sends a series of screaming noise rockets into the air, which plummet back to earth showering sparks and flaming debris. "How much noise can we make?" (it's the first out) is one of the questions asked here, and the answer is with a Goddard-sized blast of digital devilment that comes down hard and keeps pounding. Elsewhere what sounds like a William S Burroughs voice sample and disintegration of VU clips are incorporated into the mix of intricately layered beats and crushed instrumentation. Faking it has never sounded so real. □

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FASNER & PAPER PERK \$19.95
BY ROB YOUNG

"It's punk rock that seems the historical aberration." The historical premise of this book—punk as blip, not bedrock—is Simon Reynolds's tool for getting to grips with the enormous range of music and rearranged, reprocessed sounds that went on, often but not always under the radar, during post-punk's six-year window of opportunity before the MTV effect smashed into the music industry. Reynolds finds 'post-punk' part of a longer continuum that stretches back, pre-punk, to art rock and Progressive music—music that strove to mean something more than its intrinsic entertainment value. After all, what could be more Prog than the chocolate guitar (E600 from Alan Ramsey) fed to a TV audience by The Associates' Alan Rankine during Top Of The Pops?

As Reynolds admits, post-punk provided the formative musical epiphanies of his life, assuring him that music mattered. The narrative is arranged as a series of profiles of different artists, groups or 'clusters' of like-minded activities, often joined through shared geography or serology. The first few chapters range over a Western landscape of post-industrial decay—London (PL, Subway Sect), Manchester and the north of England (The Fall, Buzzcocks, Magazine), Ohio (Pere Ubu, Devo), and plunges into the dump city of late 70s downtown New York for an outline of the No Wave scene. There are plenty of memorable, piercing descriptive jobs throughout the telling of these tales—

James Chance And The Contortions are "hopped up on death-drive and artificial energy", their music "riddled with ticks and jerks—a prickly, irritable sound, like a speed-freak scratching at hallucinatory bugs under the skin".

He's very good on Gang Of Four, Wire, Human League and Talking Heads. He's great in digging up detail on the Brazilian boho-intellectual milieu of the Pop Group, and on theorising over their and counterparts the SHIT obsessions with mud, earth and a "rawe idealisation of rooks' savagery". The writing meticulously crisscrosses in the chapter on Scotti Pollitt—one of Reynolds's entry points in the post-punk state of mind. The group (actually a handful) of musicians surrounded by a large collective of hangers-on who would conduct late night political theory seminars/world domination strategy meetings), exemplified by photos of their poky Camden squat, mesh with playlists, records and Grimoire textbooks—encapsulates all that he identifies as post-punkery: D/I fanaticism, a mate-pop desire to use the song to interrogate its own content, postmodern "messathos", and a readiness to deride art by revealing the mechanisms of production and turning commercial hype tactics back on the industry. Scotti's smashabout samurai operation comes out exceptionally intriguing in Reynolds's reading—and it's no surprise that one of his favorite post-punk groups used its platform as a form of social and cultural journalism as much as a hit factory.

Reynolds is the Northrup Frye of music criticism—his most effective mode is the autopsy. Under his probing, artists and genres lock tightly into networked grooves and channels,

reaching outcomes and fulfilling destinies with a retrospective predetermination. It's a journalistic approach generally loathed by musicians and practitioners themselves, liked at being confined to a version of events that appears inevitable only in hindsight. It's why he's taken so comfortably to the blog: the perfect outlet for the usual construction of fates, the naming of pernicious megatrends, the monitoring of up and downfalls in focus, and the overreaching of the subject's horizons and metals.

Occasionally certain "blogging" traits have penetrated the book. Journalistic telescoping sometimes works against the radicalism and open-endedness of the music under discussion. There's a certain glib way of chucking in a phrase like "studio-as-instrument" as a motif for the complex, contingent practice of producers like Eno, Martin Hannett, Steven Stapleton, et al., which conveniently whitewashes nuanced ways of working that should have been more deeply investigated. And while he commendably touches on moments when post-punk collided or intersected with movements even further underground such as the London Musicians' Collective, there's a tendency to sneer at music that doesn't attempt to engage with the strategies of popular music. His summary of Throbbing Gristle's achievements, for example, is that "their music, in a sense, was merely a delivery system for their ideas"—a hangover from CDM's previous insistence in the world of conceptual art. That "merely" is telling: Reynolds appears embarrassed by forms like improvisation or performance art that don't engage via the 'top' channels of records, 'bands', press coverage, etc.

The book could have ended halfway through and remained an enlightening portrait of what's conventionally considered 'post-punk'. But after describing the depressing, violent demise of PIL (unfortunately, Reynolds doesn't get to speak to John Lydon), he embarks on an ambitious foray through post-punk's 'second wave' in the early 80s, chasing down a number of parallel scenes to their (often pitiful) conclusions. He turns up a vast amount of incidental but significant detail on the ska/mod scene; synths; the slippage into New Romanticism via Gary Numan, John Fox, Ultravox and Spandau Ballet; the jealously guarded London late-night of Steve Strange and Sade Bazzani's Stereo; the fresh-faced 'perfect pop' of Orange Juice and the Postcard label; the 'sick nose' of Foetus, Neukautzen, Psychic TV and Coil. He valiantly attempts a rescue of Malcolm McLaren's engineered one-hit wonderes Bow Wow Wow, identifying their polyrhythmic dities as Situationist canon-calls "crammed with ideas to the point of incoherence".

But their shout was still part of the enigma. By 1985... It seemed like almost all of that energy had dissipated, with every trajectory from punk reaching an impasse or petering out; he notes, as independent music suddenly reversed from futurism to retrospection and "record collected rock". Grace Jones's "Slave To The Rhythm"—an artificially induced song that couldn't be performed live, whose lyrics pile on layer after layer of allusion (from social issues to MIDI terminology)—is a fitting place to set down his pen. Buy this 550 page book of a book, read it, then lob it through the window of your local music superstore. □



Dizzy Gillespie's jam-bassoon a braincase

SATCHMO BLOWS UP THE WORLD: JAZZ AMBASSADORS PLAY THE COLD WAR

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS HBK \$69.95
BY NUA HSU

The exportation of American culture abroad is often seen as a process propelled by purely commercial motives. But from 1956 through the late 1970s, the United States government blanketed the far corners of the world with jazz, not in the service of the dollar, but in order to win the hearts and minds of the wrongly committed. Playful, disciplined and free-spirited, jazz was (and is still) one of the nation's finest products — it made sense to peddle stately, patriotic old songs like Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and Dave Brubeck in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Sly, evasive, falsely obedient and freer than a liberal democracy could ever promise to be, jazz was also a product deeply ambivalent about touring the methods and means of its own production.

Henry Von Eschen's fine study of "jazz-ambassadors" and the misread hipsters who

loved them pursues this tension down to its queerest details. Brubeck is told that he must be smuggled across the Brandenburg Gate in the trunk of a car, Gillespie and Ellington each gig miles away from armed inspection; a fresh, excited Memba Dikawa and an old, suspicious Frantz Fanon stand at the margin of the picture, humming along. The broader picture isn't quite as vivid. As Von Eschen explains, jazz diplomacy began as part of the State Department's kitchen sink approach to the problem of culture. It was an unrefined solution, managed and pushed forward by a knowing sliver of officials, critics and businessmen who "got" jazz. The image of jazz as democratic polyphony that they sold to the State Department was admirably nuanced, if a bit rosy, but it made for great hopes among both the musicians and the government officials.

One returns to the snail's eye view, though, for reminders as to why jazz musicians may not have been the most desirable ambassadors. Personnel was scarce — it would seem that every big band had at least one spirit gone missing by everyday, rather than democratic thrusts — jazz musicians

were not a wholly satisfied bunch. As the historian Thomas Borstelmann has shown, the issue of race ragged at the promotion of American values abroad. The dispatching of African-American and liberal white musicians abroad was a recipe for disillusionment, as many were forced to confront the fact that they were representing a way of life that had only recently ensured voting rights for the nation's darker hues. This is the darker echo of Von Eschen's story, that of clumsily manipulated, profoundly misunderstood pawns representing a spate of confusing, ever shifting policies. Once the administration decided that military interventionism was preferable to liberal internationalism, there was no longer a need to rely on jazz and its sticky, obtuse meanings.

A question nags: What work did this jazz do? Were jazz fans abroad hip to the future, democratic coding of jazz, or did they simply dig the exotic swing? At the level of the masses, the touring groups seemed to represent little more than spectacles. For those who managed to get up close and personal with the guests, the State Department tours

were more effective as cultural, rather than political, exchanges. Ditty those who went on the tours, Ellington recorded some of his most interesting music under the sway of foreign rhythms, though nothing ever shook his political convictions as a postdoc Republican. The tours may have complicated everyone's notion of culture, but it could not wrestle ideology from those at the top.

Von Eschen ends with a passing observation that offers insight into jazz's ethos: It is of a man who grew up alongside the Cold War and civil rights, a man who played the saxophone but respected the craft enough to know that he would forever remain a novice. He is probably the most famous, if not influential, jazz fan of the past 50 years. Of course, it is Bill Clinton. It is difficult to tell how much Clinton, Toni Morrison's "black President", got out of jazz. Like the unshaped messes of Von Eschen's study, jazz awarded Clinton a deeper, more profound respect of American culture and all its complexities, but never the grand ambition to recompose America in the image of a true and disciplined freedom. □

CUBA AND ITS MUSIC: FROM THE FIRST DRUMS TO THE MAMBO

NED SUBLETTE
CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS HBK \$31.50
BY CLIVE BELL

Ned Sublette spins the globe till Cuba appears dead centre, and then draws lines of influence across the map: from sub-Saharan Africa into the Roman Empire, via Spain; from Spain to its colony, Cuba, in the 15th century; from Africa to Cuba, in the form of three and a half centuries of forced immigration, otherwise known as the slave trade; and finally a switchback of rapids musical exchanges in the 20th century between America and Cuba, as bandleaders Dizzy Gillespie and Stan Kenton learned beats from Cuban musicians, and Cuban artist Desi Arnaz wowed US TV audiences with his cod version of the very same black dances that Desi's dad, the mayor of Havana, spent so much effort banning. The tip of dancing of slave girls in Cadiz, notorious in first century AD Rome, links to an

11 year old Elvis Presley, watching Desi Arnaz's hip-swinging choreography at his local movie house in 1946.

Sublette is a well-toured New York musician and media producer, rather than an academic, and has written up his musical passion out of frustration that so little is available on the subject in English. His book angles strongly for a proper recognition of Cuba's contribution to American music — speaking of Cuban elements in 1940s R&B — he remarks how "Latin music has maintained a strange invisibility in the United States." Colonial research underlies the writing, but Sublette keeps his tone light and lets the interplay of history and musical ideas flow nicely. Schoenberg, Stan Kenton and Pérez Prado can share the same paragraph in a discussion of dissonance. Will it be allowed: "Unfortunately, Spanish has no word for 'cheers', and it could use one."

This first volume stops in 1952. A meticulous attorney and popular radio broadcaster called Fidel Castro Ruiz has accused the president of

selling out to gangs and mob assassins, and Cuba is teetering on the brink of revolution. The final chapters are sandwiches in which layers of vivid, violent history alternate with the colourful dango of Pérez Prado and Tito Puente. But Sublette also gives us a complete history of Cuba from the 15th century, on the grounds that it is inseparable from the music's development. Plus, "We don't study history, geography or languages much in the United States." More than this, his first five chapters, about African music's collision with the Roman Empire and medieval Europe, deserve reading even by those with zero interest in Cuban music. The book manages to combine encyclopedic scope with readability: you can look up Amerigo Vesputius in the index, and find that, being black in the 1300s, he could recite his but not perform in public. Then there's a quote from John Cage about rhythm bones, and suddenly you've read another ten pages.

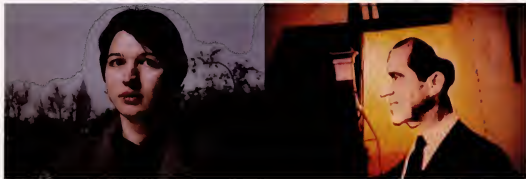
Just as the drums, played African style with the hands, underpins everything in Cuban music, so a

history of the drums runs through the book. The rest of us start to see why drummers often behave strangely, like they got religion, after a live encounter with Cuban rhythms. Sublette doesn't mince words: "The repertoire of the batá drums is the great classical music of Africa and one of the great classical musics of the world, as worthy of study as Palestrina or Bech."

And much of their history is known from the ceaseless attempts to contain and ban them. 18th century rumbe was dance music played entirely on percussion: it could be spiced on a table and a bottle. In fact, given that African instruments were prohibited, it was safer to play it that way. Even after slavery, black dock workers played rumba on barrels, periodically chastened by mambos, after mambos, the term for a liberation army soldier: "It was a bogus name, of course, because they didn't play these drums during the War for Independence," writes Sublette, "But no, so, Mr. Polhemus. These aren't African witchcraft drums. These are pathetic Cuban barrel drums — mambas!" □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Chris Rose delves into visual artist Luke Fowler's leftfield culture documentaries and rickety recordings



Left: Luke Fowler. Right: A still from his Xentos Jones documentary *The Way Out*

While the Beck's Futures prize may style itself as the alternative to the media circus that is the Turner competition, it has not been reluctant in attempting to court controversy or provoke outrage. Such prizes might help a wider public get a handle on new artists, but this may be difficult in the case of one of this year's nominees, Luke Fowler.

Fowler makes films, plays electronics and tapes in the group Rude Pravo, and runs Shadazz, alternately described as a "multimedia platform for collaborative artworks" or, more prosaically, a record label. Subsequently, any attempts to pin down or define exactly who Luke Fowler is, or describe exactly what he does, are difficult. Yet it is this very resistance to definition that characterises much of his work. "If you think about all the girls you've gone out with in your life, what's the similarity between them?" he asks, by way of explanation.

Fowler's latest film, *The Way Out*, was made in collaboration with Kosten Kiper, a former member of the Diskono collective. The film is a 'portrait' of both Xentos Jones (aka Xentos 'Fray' Bentes), formerly of post-punk group The Homosexuals, and Fowler himself. "I'm interested in people dethroning the establishment and conventional ways of working," Fowler explains. "This could be RD Laing [the 'anti-psychiatrist' about whom he made the film *What You See Is Where You're At*] or Xentos Jones. The *Way Out* is about Xentos's attempt to dethrone the music industry, examining how artists can often be suffocated by their own career. Xentos has been completely heuristic, following his own internal rhythm. I consider him to be one of the few true outsider artists."

The Way Out began when Fowler stumbled across The Homosexuals' album on a Recommended Records sampler. Kiper then lent him a copy of *The Way Out*, an album made by Xentos using the pseudonym, I. Vong. "It just blew me away," Fowler enthuses. "It was one of the most disparate records I'd ever heard, combining pastiches of jazz, improv, musique concrète and adrenalin-fuelled punk all cut up with dadaist lyrics." The LP is set in a universe where atonal satanic music has become mainstream pop music. It was an attempt to create a record that would be

uncommercial even in that setting. "Xentos was involved in so many recordings but none were just 'side projects'," Fowler expounds. "He used these invented characters as ciphers to explore unknown musical terrains. He had a genuine disgust for any concepts of 'networking' or 'careers'. People like Jandek seem to me a triumph of anti-marketing, cashing in on the myth of the 'tormented artist'. This is as much a marketing strategy as pandering to the media. Xentos kicks against this – he has no interest in seeking acceptance from the outside world or using his art as cultural capital."

Fowler insists the film "is not just a straight documentary but a film about conflicts of representation and the struggle for creative independence". The dizzying collage of found footage, including some of Jones's own Super-8 films, interviews and surreal sketches, occasionally recalls a Monty Pythonesque spoof documentary. Some moments are even reminiscent of the underground comedy unit *Foreign Theatre*. Playing with form, contradictory and fragmentary, it is in fact a reflection of Xentos's puzzling and difficult character and work. "It was amazing to see him playing his 'instruments' on last year's Feedback: Order From Noise tour around the UK. These instruments that reject any notion of control or order could be very brutal and aggressive, but also very beautiful."

Fowler's involvement with music is most notable in Shadazz, which he defines as "an outlet for people being creative in electronic music". The first Shadazz CD, titled *The Scottish Demo Collective*, took a selection of musicians unknown even in their homeland of Scotland and brought them together as part of a free CD and fanzine for an art show in Greece. The second, 2001's *The Invisible Insurrection Of A Million Minds*, was a deliberate attempt to confront the commercial market; but, as it sold so few copies, it was a "total failure". The third compilation, *Merlin Modules For Miriam*, took Scottish electronic music into the artwork, with the offer to make a free CD for the Dutch conceptual art magazine *Casoo Issues*. The *WIS EWI Eye Is Source* was a collection of collaborative works subverting the function of the music video.

Shadazz recently issued *The Dust Is Flying*, the first single by Fowler's collaborative group Rude Pravo. Currently consisting of Fowler on electronics and tapes, Steve Jones on bass, Lucie Desamouray on vocals and Janice Murray on cello, Rude Pravo sound like "a cross between The Honeymoon Killers and a medieval No Wave ensemble", according to Fowler. Featuring found sounds and a tiny drum machine with a swelling cello underpinning the French vocals, "The Dust Is Flying" is haunting and elegiac. The song's experimental elements play off against a strong emotional pull – a tension found throughout Fowler's work.

Fowler is currently working on a film about Cornelius Cardew and The Scratch Orchestra. Due to be finished in October, it also confronts issues of artistic integrity. "I'm interested in how the music establishment believed that when Cardew turned to tonal political music he had somehow betrayed the experimental school," he explains. "We're in a rooming music for political motives he asks who we fundamentally make music for, critically questioning the function of the avant garde in society." Again, the film is not a straight documentary; it resists definition in the same way that film is about resisting definition. According to Fowler, Cardew's Scratch Orchestra "were trying to work outside a system, yet they eventually fractured due to internal squabbles and the perceived disunity between theory and practice". They became involved in Marxism and the notion of making music to serve the cause of socialism. "Of course this form of socialist realism explicitly suppresses the individual's artistic freedoms. But [paraphrasing] John Tilly's counter-argument is that 'artistic freedom' under capitalism is just as oppressive, but the form of oppression is covert. To become a successful artist you have to serve the art market, the gallery system and its dealers. It's a different, yet more insidious control system. Are you really more free this way than with art made under an honest, clear political cause?"

Despite his Beck's Futures nomination, which means Fowler is now "working for the beer man", as he puts it, the question is one which his work will continue to ask. *The Beck's Futures* runs until 15 May at London's ICA. Rude Pravo and other Shadazz editions are available through www.shadazz.co.uk

Left to right: Lars in *Kill Yr Idols*; still from *Legong, Dance Of The Virgins*; Robert Moog with his theremin

KILL YR IDOLS

SCOTT CRAVY 2004, 79 MIN
BY ANNE HELDE NISSET

Scott Cravy's documentary on the No Wave scene has a promising start. Martin Rev remembers seeing New York Dolls and reading Lester Bangs for the first time; Lydia Lunch and Jim Sclafano recall the creative desperation that spurred Teenage Jesus And The Jerks; Glenn Branca growls about the rock music that shook off the blues legacy; Arto Lindsay sounds off about dismantling the building blocks of music while Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore rap about reductionist techniques. The 1980s in New York were a time of experimentation and vision, and music created out of hatred need for territories.

The best of the film comes early on, with the rare footage of Sonic Youth, teenage Jesus and Swans, plus clips from Lunch and Jim "Toots" Thirlwell in Richard Kern's notorious transgressive films *Fingered* and *The Right Side Of My Brain*. And then it all goes down fast. The editing is hasty and restless, and the decision to divide the story into "chapters," with titles like "Legacy," "Nostalgia," "The Scene," "Memory As Commerce" not only ruins the continuity, it adds an annoyingly self-conscious and student-like quality.

But the real problem starts when Cravy attempts some sort of thesis about the bond between No Wave and current New York groups. Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O comes across as terminally unfocused, saying nothing worthwhile about her own or anybody else's music. Mumbling about experimenting on stage, Lars hurls his look of determination quite well, until one forcibly blurt, "We don't know what we're about, we'd like you to help us figure that out." A self-promoting ensemble of vociferous posers called ATE Weapons sound, "We've been kicking ass under this name for three years now, going on to say how absurdly 'cool' it is to walk the streets of New York while displaying my esteem in the trends — groups, parties — than the actual business of playing music."

It's a dispiriting sort of affairs, and when Lunch launches a scathing attack on current formulaic and unadventurous rock groups, mode

up of people getting into music for all the wrong reasons, you can't help but sigh in relief that somebody is finally speaking up. At which point the film simply flees away without making any point in any direction. An opportunity missed.

LEGONG, DANCE OF THE VIRGINS

HENRI DE LA PALAISSE 1938, 48 MIN
MILSTONE DVD

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

In 1933, the Marquis Henri de la Palaisse de la Courde, financed by his wife (Hollywood actress Constance Bennett), ventured to Bali with a Paramount Studios crew to film, in weirdly beautiful low-strip Technicolor, a tale of unrequited love and self-immolating sorrow set amidst authentically depicted village life: *Legong, Dance Of The Virgins*.

The results were of a piece with films enhanced by romanticized ethnography shot in the same era — Robert Flaherty's *Nanook Of The North* or FW Murnau's *Tabu*. In its day, *Legong* fared well with audiences craving exotica, there had already begun a vogue for imagery and catchphrases derived from the Pacific Island, which was then newly "discovered" by mired travelers. Later, however, the film all but vanished, downbeat by valiant censors. Fortunately, when excising offending footage, different censors' moral agendas didn't overlap; the Americans were incensed by Balinese nudity, the British were agitated by depictions of cockfights. In the 90s, UCLA's Film And Television Archive managed to reconstruct De La Palaisse's original edit from prints found on both sides of the Atlantic.

To herald the restored edition, a new score was composed during 1998-99 by Richard Marmot of San Francisco's Dub Foot Orchestra and the guest musical director of Gamelan Sekar Jaya, I Made Subandjo. This soundtrack, which was performed live during a select few screenings in New York and the Bay Area, has been added to the *Legong* DVD as an optional audio track. Given that the original Hollywood orchestration represented little more than an orientalist pastiche typical of its day, the

Marmot-Subandjo score is all the more welcome.

On the surface of the score, the Club Foot slings and woodwinds provide accessible melodies and emotional content familiar to Western moviegoers, while the metallophone and bamboo percussion of Gamelan Sekar Jaya couch the depictions of village life and ceremony in sonic verisimilitude. The two ensembles mesh beautifully without retikable dissonance between either group's tunings or rhythms. The composers decided, early on, to divide the scenes between their respective groups, with the Western players handling plot exposition and romantic themes, and the gamelan underscoring the numerous rituals central to *Legong's* plot.

The finished score doesn't reflect a tidy division of labour. Rather, one hears culturally dissimilar groups integrating. Gamelan Sekar Jaya functions as a rhythm section behind the Club Foot's melodies, and often it's the Balinese ensemble that lingers the core emotions of a given scene. The DVD's stereo mix places the strings and woodwinds back in a naturally reverberant soundscape, as though recreating "live" recordings made in the time of *Legong's* filming. The gamelan's brass and bamboo percussion are placed in the rear field, their dense harmonics shimmering in perfect complement to the sunlit vapors onscreen.

MOOG

HANS FJELLESTAD 2004, 70 MIN
PUEBLO DVD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

If a maffie could ever leave a crater, it would probably have the depth and dimensions of this meandering patchy documentary, helplessly in search of a subject. Premisibly responsible for 2002's *Frontier Line*, a feature on the electronic music scene in Tijuana, musician and director Fjellestad appears to have followed Bob Moog around the world, capturing him on street corners in Tokyo or burrowed down in conversation with an interesting coterie of former colleagues, old practitioners or more recent neophytes, and yet the resulting portrait firmly remains an outsider's one. You can see the problem right there in the

title: does Moog refer to Bob Moog the man or his Moog synthesizer invention? Hard to say: there's little biographical material for other depth to the former and not enough coherent analysis or technical detail to support the latter. To confuse matters further, Fjellestad makes use of the old Moog company logo for his film's title sequence, but there is next to nothing in the film to reflect the complex corporate history it represents.

And yet there is evidently a story worth telling here, it's just unfortunate that at each stage in the project Fjellestad seems to have assumed his audience already knew it. His chummy pursuit of Moog has as its basis the assumption that because Big Bob is responsible for such a fascinating modern phenomenon as the modular synthesizer, he must therefore be fascinating in and of himself. Big mistake.

Bob Moog was and is a sublimely gifted engineer with a preternatural sensitivity for what's going on inside the board. "I can feel what's going on in a piece of equipment," he states, expressing an intuitive response he also claims to detect in the approach of other musicians, such as Rick Wakeman and Keith Emerson. In itself, this does not make him a musician, as evidenced by Moog's somewhat sluggy rendition of *Old Mac Dwell on a Therman* towards the film's conclusion.

He is, however, a man who was engaged with a particular moment in music's history; and the few incidents when stuff starts happening on the screen usually occur while Moog is reminiscing with those involved in the early days of the synthesizer's genesis.

Collaborator Walter Seal, looking dapper in a black turtleneck sweater, talks candidly about the difficulties of finding a market for the device, let alone customers. It was one that changed from moment to moment during the 1960s, Moog admits, from jingles to TV and radio commercials, to composers of library music to producers and arrangers for the big record labels.

Moog player Gershwin Kingley talks with consummate grace of being introduced to an early model by Eric Sade, an energetic pioneer of the commercial use of electronic sound. Composer Herb Deutsch, sitting in a room filled



Music to the eye (left to right): Oskar Fischinger, *Allegretto (Late Version)*, 1942, and James Whitney, *Lapis*, 1959-66, both at Los Angeles MOCA

with orderly lines of grand pianos, recalls how back in the day he had wondered whether the early model synthesizers required a keyboard at all. If some of the film's truly dire performances are anything to go by, especially from the likes of Stereolab, Money Mark, Mac Master Mike and Bernie Worrell, he may well have had a point.

NOIR NOISE

TOM HOVINDSØLE 2004, 117 min
PASTICHE FILMS/HOVI DVD + CD

BY EDWIN POWCOURT

In his documentary on the contemporary noise scene (with the emphasis on Norway), film maker Tom Hovindsole tracks down a dozen sound artists in a bid to discover what the term means to them. Armed with a camera and a low budget, he confronts his chosen subjects and fires the same simple question at them: "What is noise music?" The answers reveal much about the evolution of the genre and those who are involved in its development. The talking heads include Tore H Bæ, David Conner, Moszi Akita aka Morrow, Lasse Marhaug, Toshimaru Nakamura, ARN, Asbjørn Fla, Maya SK Røkke, Neil Rønne Jensen, Francisco López, Helge Sten and Osamu Yoshizaki, all of whom speak eloquently and passionately about noise and what it means to them.

For Bæ, noise is just a small fragment of a larger sound collage, to which he adds electronic sound, rattles otherwise and spills rice over a cymbal in a bid on approach that slightly steps away from the accepted concentrated stare at the illuminated screen of an Apple Powerbook. Moszi Akita, however, seems inextricably linked to his computer. After zapping up Morrow's analogue piece inside the 50 CD Morrow on the Extreme label, Akita now feels as though he has been remon "as if I had just started doing noise", he embraces through yellow subtitles. "I'm making music because I can't sing like birds and other animals," he continues. "The human world which is abusing beautiful animals should be ruined." The short brutal bursts of Morrow's performance (solo and with Norwegian noise duo Jackhammer) suggest that he has enough power to inflict animal justice on the human race if the mood took him.

Punctuated throughout the footage are brief quotes by diverse composers and musicians – such as Luigi Russolo, Edgard Varèse and John

Cage; Industrial and post-punk rockers Boyd 'Non' Rice, Einstürzende Neubauten and Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore – whose work within noise is considered by Hovindsole (and many of his interviewees) as integral to its creative archaeology. Accompanying the DVD is an excellent CD featuring sound explosions from a gathering of Norwegian artists and groups (Tore H Bæ, Jackhammer, Fa-Mat, Norwegian Noise Orchestra, etc) which, perhaps unintentionally, manages to tell as much about the state of noise in Norway than the actual film.

VISUAL MUSIC LOS ANGELES MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART USA

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

In an exhibition that, by definition, transports viewers through several decades of cross-fertilisation between music and the plastic arts, sequencing is critical. Visual Music makes its greatest impression sporadically, rather than sustaining what is at intervals a galvanising impact; often it is, too, owes to the eristic sequence of presentation between galleries. Immediately upon entering the show, visitors are confronted with a film theatre screening short films, some with soundtracks. The repeating programme offers the best known work of legendary animators such as Viking Eggling. Oscar Lindquist and, from a later period, the American occultist and renegade folklorist Harry Smith. With hierarchically large-scale projection, the linear abstract forms derived from nature as drawn by Eggling seem more closely related to the fuxus aesthetics of Smith's application of batik dye techniques to film stock. Both film makers' involvement with music seems obvious: Smith's Abstracts possesses both the volatile energy of the jazz musicians he socialised with and the hallucinatory intimation of the Native American shamans whose music he documented. Eggling, most often identified as a deist, sought to define a language of counterpart with the evolving shapes of his Synchromic Diagonals. Paintings by Eggling and his fellow animator (and occasional collaborator) Hans Richter on display in subsequent rooms further underline the desire of these iconoclastic talents to infuse their visual

work with the elusive energy and syntax of music.

Fischinger's Radio-Dynamics is another component of the screening room's programme; his "experiment in colour-rhythm", as the title card states, straddles Eggling's formal concerns and the hyper-drive of Smith's handmade films. It also introduces a key originator of geometrical style in animated film, one whose work and influence crop up repeatedly through the balance of Visual Music. It is with the screening of Colour Box, a British 1935 advertising short by the New Zealand-born sculptor and film maker Len Lye, that Visual Music's first significant onscreen is detected. Lye's contemporary, the Canadian animator Norman McLaren, explored the possibilities afforded by painting directly on film stock, specifically that portion of the film reserved for optically read soundtracks. Fischinger's film-strip paintings evoke the look of McLaren's work, but were just that: paintings. The other animations, however frenetic, had music dubbed on their audio tracks. McLaren's abstract works (such as *Radio Dials* and *Blinking Blinks*) acutely generated sound in concert with their visual vernacular of geometry and pulsing rhythms.

Intertwining of picture and vibration was intrinsic to McLaren's animations. Yet his substantial body of work goes unmentioned in the MOCA exhibition. The electric experience of the films first encountered makes for an ungainly transition to the galleries that follow, containing an extensive survey of abstract paintings from the early years of the 20th century. Wassily Kandinsky stands out in this collection, which includes key entries from Paul Klee and Francis Picabia. Despite the audiographic MP3 players posted throughout the painting galleries, it's difficult to sense the revolutionary impact freighted by these works in their day. They are simply overpowered, in their wisecracking environment, by the films that precede them. Indeed, the scroll-format paintings of animators Eggling (1919's *Penode X*) and Hans Richter's *Orchestration Of Colour and Fuge In Red Und Gold*, both from 1923, assume de facto status as foci of attention in the room, being initiated with cinematic lights.

The curators of Visual Music have sound a coup with their investigation of colour organs and related mechanical/visual devices that employed discs, lenses, prisms and keyboards in varying

attempts to modulate colour information along a timescale. Wiley, individual rooms have been screened one-off machines like Daniel Vladimir Benard-Rossini's *Piano Optophonique* (1922-23) and the proto-laser light hybrid constructions of Thomas Wilfred. The latter, a Danish artist who emigrated to the US, edited the ideas of "silent visual music", eschewing altogether the robot of images referred to recorded sound. Wilfred's was a pure attempt to promote synesthesia in the viewer, via the use of his invention, the Cinelux (which, like the lava lamp, came in sizes variously appropriate to home or corporate installations). Unfortunately, the sounds of nearby installations impinge on the quiet workings of the Cinelux in a way that courtliness would have ruffled Wilfred's feathers.

As the exhibit nears the present day, the new energy of invention seems to taper off into soft-focus lightshow companies of the late 60s lacks the generative jet provided in that enterprise by Manhattans Exploding Plastic Inevitable, and the simple fact that the lightshow was invented at San Francisco's Tape Center through the collaboration of composer Martin Saks and visual artist Lee Romero (see *The Wire* 1941 is ignored outright – while the choice of contemporary artists/musicians seems increasingly local to Southern California. To its credit, though, Visual Music occasioned a string of enthralling corollary performances. Thrilling Gassia alum in Chris Carter and Casey Farris Tubs were staged at the neighbouring CalArts Redcat Theatre, as were other evenings promising sets by Tom Reardon, Roster Norton and David Rosenbloom, the latter offering his theatrical, multimedia *El Solario*.

Visual Music's successes and shortcomings may be epitomised by the tension between the transcendence offered by John Whitney's tele-screen animation *Side Phase DII* (1965) and the limp, twice disco-bait programming of Mike Sawa's *Andromeda (The Canyon)* from 2003, each accessed through their own spaces. Leaving the exhibition area and moving upstairs to MOCA's bookstore, you heard Young Marble Giants singing "Tired Day" on the house system, through the store window, light glinted off the glass of neighbouring financial towers. Synesthesia was achieved, all too easily, in this moment. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by JG Thirlwell



ALICE COOPER
MUSCLE OF LOVE
WARNER BROS 1074

ALBUM CONCEPT AND DESIGN BY
PACIFIC EYE & SAW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAINT-GHAGIO DESANGES

Muscle Of Love wasn't Alice Cooper's finest hour musically, or even necessarily his finest sleeve, but as a piece of packaging it consists of a bizarre confluence of elements. Cooper had released innovative, elaborate classics previously

like *School's Out* (which had legs that folded out to turn it into a school desk, with the record wrapped in an actual pair of pterises), *Beats 'n' Bobs* (a 'weller' containing a million dollar bill) and *Killer* (where Alice is gloriously hung by the neck in the gatefold), which all seemed to marry the whimsical, surreal and the violent.

Muscle comes in a corrugated cardboard box with printing on the outside in pink, in an apparent statement of form following function. It

took me a while to realise that the discoloration on the bottom half of the box was printed on to it. Evidently this meant that the one 'muscle' within was fresh, dripping and had soaked through the cardboard.

This was not ornamental or decorative for contemplative stoners – this was unapologetically packaging! 'Fragile', warned the box, 'Do not bend. Avoid Excessive Heat!'. A die-cut lip on the back flipped up to reveal its contents.

When I first saw it as a kid I wasn't quite sure

whether it was the real cover, or some kind of advance or promo package that the record was held in until the real cover came along. They didn't so much carry this allusion along into the box though. A credits page with unusual imagery includes folding instructions to transform it into a book cover. And on a full colour sleeve the band are depicted as sailors on shore leave who are thrashed at the 'Institute of Nude Wrestling' by a blonde goddess. (Poetry's new album, *Love*, is released next month on Budram.

Go To:

Creative Commons (creativecommons.org) is a progressive think-tank which stoically believes that the music industry should spend more time on legal innovation than technological ingenuity. Its manifesto, found online, proposes 'flexible music licensing' where artists decide what kind of sampling or remixing rights they'll grant. So far, The Beatles, Chuck D and David Byrne among others have grabbed Creative Commons licenses for certain songs, with Creative Commons itself offering some of the results at their **CC Mixer** site (mixer.org). **United Remixers Guild** (www.unguild.com) has no charter as traditional guilds do, but offers free membership to regard and rote megamixes of everything from Bryan Ferry to reggaeton to Justin Timberlake.

Granting similar services, **Section** (www.sectionu.com) welcomes all 'bedroom composers' to 'learn, review, share, collaborate, and most importantly be heard'. Though more limited to Techno, the participants there offer up an impressive sonic range with notables including Epith's Prodigy remix and Fjallas assembling Nine Inch Nails, Johnny Cash and his own singing.

Not to be outdone, some software companies are joining in on the fun. In a crafty promotional move, **Mixman** (www.mixman.com) not only provides remixing software, but also space on their site for users to show off their handiwork at **Mixman Radio** (www.mixman.com/radio/) with striking results. In an interesting twist, **PromoRoom**

(www.promoroom.dpages.com) lets record labels themselves feature new tunes and get feedback from DJs and fans to figure out if they'll want to put out a song or not.

If just reimagining sounds from dance records sounds too vanilla for you, **Video Game Music Archives** (www.vgmusic.com) offers up redone musical snapshots from your favourite pixelated spots: Super Mario Brothers, Zelda, Tetris and Pokémon all get the treatment there. Video Game Music Archives' criteria is that they want 'well done mixes', which doesn't just include 'adding a drum beat, changing an instrument, and slipping on a lame title'. Surely that's some sage advice that many would-be IDM artists would do well to take to heart.

JASON GROSS



On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh





Opposite page (clockwise from top): Matmos, Slint's Dave Pajo, Deerhoof. Above: The Melvins

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES CAMBER SANDS

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

All Tomorrow's Parties is a festival with a capacity for magic, set in the most banal surroundings. Held at the incongruous setting of a coastal family holiday camp, for six years it has pursued a noble selection policy—a curator is free even to choose 40-50 performers for the weekend and select whatever indie films and bootleg videos they'd like piped into festivalgoers' chalets. Putting faith in an open-minded but by name curator creates an event larger than you might expect for a predominantly indie-led festival—no matter who selects the line-up, every year you turn up and find several hundred music fans drinking beer, kicking footballs and waiting patiently for the music to start. After a highly successful 15th anniversary last year, with acts ranging from graying Scandinavian dromers Todd Gitsh Osh Sostar to East London teenager Oluzse Rascal, this year ATP has secured their biggest coup yet, luring legendary Louisville outfit and post-rock founders Slint out of retirement to play and curate the festival.

Yet the usual ATP quality is spread a little thinly this weekend. The line-up is two thirds the size of previous years, making remaining performances even more packed, with as many festivalgoers running for the sake of the pub and its notoriously diverse DJ sets. Some acts seem more suited to a stuffy local back bar than a cutting-edge music festival, as they are aggressively conservative musically. Second on the bill on the

opening night, Sean Gamson and The Five Finger Discount's undated, old-time country should have been there as a mid-afternoon novelty. Other artists seem too young or ungraciously merit the relatively large stage of ATP, such as Red Nails (clearly still in the embryonic stages of refining their songcraft) or Mighty Flashlight (whose musicians receive cues from singer Mike Fellows for the whole duration of the gig).

Ironically, Slint themselves sound fresher than anyone this weekend. Their 1991 album *Spiderland*, not a dynamic record as much as a dramatic or cinematic one, virtually defined the start of post-rock. It is a powerful narrative of loss and introspection moulded from angular, almost jazzy music, with Brian MacFadden's lyrical narrative evoking an out of body detachment.

At ATP to an audience of well over 1000 people, the five individuals who figured in Slint's short lifespan play all of *Spiderland*, most of their debut *Tweez* and both tracks of the untitled EP recorded between the two. The expectant silence of the crowd is broken as the guitar introduction of "Breadcrumb Trail"—a succinct motif as singular and enigmatic as "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds"—receives a generous cheer. Played slowly and deliberately, even the jagged, youthful material of *Tweez* unfolds to reveal a fractured soulfulness. Slint's music turns out to be not so much tortured and insular as transcendental, even with a hint of redemption. In the light of the performance, my outfit taking a similarly lateral approach to structuring rock music—ATP performs Mogwai and Polar Goidie Cars among them—struggle to bring

anything truly new to the table.

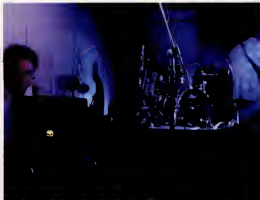
The Melvins—joined briefly at the end by a stage-diving, strategically unclothed David Yow of The Jesus Lizard—are another veteran act who sound strikingly contemporary. Their sludgy rock is serious and thrillingly intimidating, their pummeling cover of The Beatles' "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" awkward and misdebeund as a bodybuilder chatting up a schoolgirl. The rhythm section, especially Kevin Rutanama's juddering bass work, grows around the music rather than simply pushing it forward, achieving terrifying intensity without the slightest echo of a reliable rock pulse.

Matmos, one of only two electronic acts this weekend, provide the festival's most visually stimulating spectacle. As Louisville born Drew Daniel hunches down behind a laptop and MC Schrikt samples bubbles blown into a bowl of water projected in close up on a pink screen behind them, the wet strove and dripping liquid appear hilariously erotic. Matmos make anti-gothic electronic music, valuing the wholeness of sounds and not fragments thereof, fattening up the beats to the point of edibility and teasing wino-making sounds of a creaked knuckle into a playful symphony of popping corn.

When Deerhoof aren't exploring intricate Prog passages, they create an asymmetric, impulsive George pop noise that tempts you somehow to shake an ass to it. Since their last ATP performance, they have become more extrovert, more absurd and they're all the more singular for it. Mogwai's post-rock has entered a calm state in the last few years. Exchanging angry guitars for a piano as soft and sad as raindrops, it's now

used as a soundtrack for Channel 4 television trailers. Their performance today sees no change in their slow-building songcraft, but taken on its own melodic terms it is pleasantly reflective. Bent Heller on a backwoods duo who intertwine vocals like a pair of Jeff Beckleys singing hillbilly gospel. Fingerspicking guitar is offset by primitive double bass, bowed drones, open strings, even massaging the wood grain of the instrument to approximate the squeaking, broom-scraping accompaniment of early blues recordings. Although White Moggi's Mrs Brodie has earned comparisons with Nico for her vivid vocals and taut piano accompaniment, a gentler Giamala Gales might be a closer approximation—her intimate song poems demonstrate a risk-taking and personal disclosure absent from the more conformist, self-satisfied alt-country acts who perform this weekend.

Slint's All Tomorrow's Parties proved another worthwhile weekend, if not quite as unmissable as previous years. All acts had admirable independent credentials, although by focusing predominantly on guitar based American outfits it lacked the usual sense of constituting a genuine alternative to other festivals, something that ATP usually effortlessly provides. Even Slintmaster, a moderately amusing "group versus fans" staring competition accompanied by WWF style wrestling bombast that headlined one of the main stages, was a good deal less interactive and interesting than the passionate alternative rock karaoke in the bar next door, and towards the end of the festival, an impressive pots and pans protest against Slintmaster erupted in the prison camp-like environs of the chalet area. □



Clockwise from top left: Ahmad Abdallah and Delirious at TUMIst; The Dead C at What Is Music?; paying homage to Ustad Vilayat Khan in London

USTAD VILAYAT KHAN LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Ustad Vilayat Khan (1928-2004) was a towering figure in Indian classical music, a sitar virtuoso who invariably translated his extraordinary technical command into immediately affecting emotional values. This tribute concert brought together musicians able to capture and convey essentials of the spirit that animated his music. A short documentary on Vilayat Khan preface the first set of an evening that stretched beyond six hours.

Shriyati Husain Khan performed two compositions by his father, appearing for the first time at a concert dedicated specifically to his

memory. His sitar voicings are sweet-toned yet cut through with flashes of quavering agility and improvisational guile. The twinned tablas of Shankar Debbarth and, more prominently, Anuragshi Chaudhary were brilliantly coordinated with the course and momentum of Shriyati Khan's solos, as each unfolded towards its culminating, breathtaking moment of resolution.

A concluding love song, rendered with a tender singing voice that matched his instrumental style, drew collective gasps and signs of appreciation from the knowledgeable and receptive audience.

In the second set, tribute was paid by the magisterial pairing of Shivkumar Sharma's santoor (hammered dulcimer) and Hariprasad

Chaurasia's bansuri (bamboo flute), accompanied superbly on tabla by Shripast Ahmed Khan. Innovative and hugely influential in their adaptation of folk instruments to music that observes and extends existing classical standards, the duo's sound combines pastoral charm with highly sophisticated execution.

Technical problems with acoustic projection and the tuning requirements of the santoor slackened the evening's pace, but Shivkumar Sharma's massaged glissandi and Hariprasad Chaurasia's teasing bamboo bird calls were, in a real sense, enchanting. In a surreal turn, they were invited at the end of their set to draw the raffie tickets.

It was getting late when the magnificent Hindustani Khyal singer Kishor Amerkar took

the stage, and during the hour-long unfolding of "Raga Rageshwari" the audience thrived nobly, but that reflected transport logistics rather than the quality of her music, which was sublime. Balkumar Keshivan supplied tabla punctuation. Nandini Bedekar interjected strong and distinctive vocal support. Mind Raiker's violin and Sugam Suresh's harmonium blended with tambura to project a radiant droning cloud of sound through which the great vocalist's singing flowed and rippled with such ease, it seemed that she was simply breathing through music. A spellbinding performance that made the evening's occasional technical problems negligible. Overall this was one of those rare concert experiences that glow steadily richer and more affecting in memory. □

WHAT IS MUSIC 2005 MELBOURNE VARIOUS VENUES

BY JON DALE

Australia's annual What Is Music festival reached its tenth anniversary in 2005. Curators Oren Ambarchi and Robbie Avenaim have built the festival from a series of low-key gigs in Sydney to a three-city behemoth, also covering Brisbane and Melbourne. They're also deeply neglected one of the major problems facing any experimental music programmer: balancing downward acts with wildcat rises. This year's festival was structured differently to previous efforts — alongside the intimate club gigs that are What Is Music's staples, Ambarchi and Avenaim co-organised two nights, named the Overturn, at Melbourne's Forum Theatre, featuring more than 30 performances on three stages in eight hours.

The first night was set in Melbourne's Hotti Hall. A quartet of Anthony Guerra and Anni Gubenkova on prepared guitars, Yoshino Koike on trombone and Taketani Naoshima on electronics opened the festival. Their set was energetic, with Koike the enabler, abstracting his trombone far from its traditional lexicon.

Although their music shared certain approaches with what Berlin resident and co-curator John Koller, the quartet's playing wasn't dogmatic — they simply and very quietly soaked the most apposite sounds from their instruments.

Anthony Paterson's Twitch Ensemble was undeniably busy and glitchy. Some rasped interplay flashed through at times — mostly from the real-time processing of Robin Fox. But the top-down hierarchy of composer/conductor

veined on deictal and the performance never gelled. A similar problem befell Australian artist Philip Samartz's Absence And Presence composition. While the freedom written into the score allowed for some strong improvisation from guitarist David Bower and percussionist Andrew Barm, too much of this performance was a perfunctory series of tied electronics, cello scrapes and faintest electronic. Absence And Presence fell flat.

From here the festival gave rein to the overseas contingent. The initial visceral throb of hearing Pan Sonic's strident electronics flooding the room, bursts of white noise scarifying huge edifices of primal rhythm, eventually gave way to a besome structure — insert beat, efface with scounding distortion, repeat process. Pan Sonic's Mika Varro did offer one of the festival's most enduring moments, invading the stage and wrestling with members of Chicks On Speed during the latter group's punk-electro number "Turn Of The Century." The Chicks' show is usually pure pleasure, but the duo looked as though they were going through the motions, until the shuffletick of "Fishes Rules" shocked them into overdose.

The first half hour of the Residents' 33rd Anniversary Retrospective was surprisingly strong, rerouting their selections from early in their career like "The Joyous" and "New." But as they bawled through their history, the quality of their output lessened, and the few songs that offered glimpses of the Residents' peculiar way with pop music were reduced by a halfhearted, infatuated performance, evocating anything affecting from their material.

Performance of a different kind was central to Sunn D)))'s intense volume, moribund riffs and

body rattling low-register vibrations were all present, but the Sunn D))) spectacle bordered on high camp, a boys with their toys' commune that revelled in smoke-machine excess, you're never sure if the cod-epigraphous poses and robes are supposed to be humorous. Their benign, blissed-out couters Growing opened both Overturn nights to sparse audiences, but the duo acquitted themselves well, filling the main room with mercurial drones and wandering melodies.

New York's Black Dice burned the delicacy and dynamics of albums like *Beaches And Canyons*, building go-nowhere edifices of electronics, clunky guitar and vocal chants that added their own raw little too intently. Gang Gang Dance were puzzlingly bent with a flaccid spring dance — imagine a limp high school group trying to play The Pop Group.

Wednesday night at the Corner Hotel saw Kevin Drumm perched above his electronics with a quizzical look on his face, immobile as he unleashed massive blasts of granulated sound, a thunderstorm stuck in a bullhorn. The highlight of Drumm's visit to Melbourne, however, was a totally outcoursing DJ set of Metal classics and obscure tracks at the afterhours festival club

Stefan Neville, aka Puro, elevated the one-man band to new status, shifting from interminably selections to spinning track-pace jams, and then closing the night with a self-acknowledged tribute to the Dead. Learning through his chair between a miniature guitar, tape machines, a small Casio and a delirious drum kit, peeling out blurted chords while his feet pointed away in base and seam, Neville's three sets were among the festival's highlights.

Stefan Belpash was an understated presence, though his fluid guitar playing sent off

furious sprays of notes as he worked through Media Eastern modes, a Django Reinhardt tribute and complex improvisations. He turned to The Sun City Girls' back catalogue several times, resurrecting torch of The Mystics classics "The Vinegar Stroke" and "Evidencia Of Abyssinia." But his most brutal and hilarious move was a one-off raucous rendition of Charlie Gocher's "Horse Kick Phrasies."

Australia's Hi-God People were startlingly good. Expanding their ranks to 15 members, all costumed in wild suits — cardboard box suits with mirrors, one member covered head to toe in balloons — they brought a comical air to the Forum's second stage. A front row of improvising musicians clattered away on myriad percussion, straked steel and blown woodwinds, setting a bed of low-level freedom sound for strange, otherwise, slow-motion theatre. Later in the same room, Yohim P-W's OOHOO essayed a set of shapshifting, sprightly pop songs, with shad-faced guitar exchanges spilling over limber bass and drums. But it was The Dead C who crowned the festival, with two overwhelming performances of free rock. Wednesday's set at the Corner Hotel was expansive, the trio fitting such virginalous peaks that one's sense of time was completely stretched and suspended. Bruce Russell's and Michael Morley's longed guitar attack, sliced through the air in the room with Russell howling his instruments with screechiness and other implements. On Saturday night, they cut to the chase, bleeding heavy levels of damage out of their amps before slandering into a three-minute punk song, where bursts of feedback bled around Robbie Vetter's jackhammer rhythms. □

TUMFEST HELSINKI VARIOUS VENUES FINLAND

BY BRIAN MORTON

Bertolt Brecht said the Firms had the unique capacity to be silent in two languages, their own and that of the audience. Swedish still has its place on bilingual street signs and in the persistence here and there of Helsinki's other name, Helsingfors, like an old atlas. Brecht's point doesn't entirely square with the ubiquity of mobile phones — more here, in Helsinki's heartland, than anywhere on the planet except Korea — or with the vivid polyglot, jazz-influenced music on show at the inaugural TUMFest.

Pete Haasilta's beautifully curated and designed label has yet to make much impact outside Finland, but it will. The line-up over two cold but well attended nights was a mixture of locals, Danes and Americans. If Finnish music has been coloured — by jazz, Latin American dance, by the brooding moods of Wagner and Bruckner that come down through the 20th century via Sibelius — it has acquired a strong independent identity. The prevailing tone is dark, slow and with a deep, troubling pulse that recalls the country's bizarre fasciation with tempo.

The signature expression of it in most recent years was the late Edward Vesala's Sound & Visions, and the first night of TUMFest closed with a ritualistic eclectic set by a new ensemble led by Vesala's widow Ina Haasilta and virtuosic bassist Ulf

Krokkers. Haasilta's piano playing and keyboard abstractions — no pass for the moment — is minimalist, mostly abstract and very rarely long-formatted and yet one suspects she's the driving force, den mother to a ten-strong personnel that doubles up bass and drums and adds Johannes Iivonen's pure voice to a powerful phalanx of horns. Haasilta and the rhythm section mostly create contexts for the soloists; she and Krokkers take a couple of features, and it's the only criticism of their set that they didn't seek to drop in a duo spot. That said, it didn't lack for variety, ranging from huge orchestral noises to soft, baladish numbers, like the unexpected closing track where Iivonen made the most of a sentimental lyric.

There had already been a vocal surprise. Saxophonist John Tolosa, one of the titans of European jazz with credits including Coltrane's *Ascension* and Johnny Dymer, put aside his more for three strong, half-spoken songs, all the more affecting for an unpolished accent — African/Danish/New York — and a delivery as light and papery as Chat Baker. His horn was playing up, a sticky active line it looked like, but he was in fine and familiar voice there. The real revelation of the set was drummer Stefan Paulberg. The young Dane was one of the busier men on the night. He'd only just come offstage with Delivious, a fresh, compact and well-rehearsed quartet who mix modern sounds with an old-fashioned sensibility, largely thanks to Kasper Tannberg's corner. With Tolosa, Paulberg

handled every metre with calm, everything from a free calypso rhythm to free-jazz and the inevitable Dymer tune.

The two were joined for a couple of numbers by the other hardest working man in Finnish showbusiness. Saxophonist Mikko Iivonen is one quarter of Delivious. He has a hard, squally tone that shouldn't sound right with other horns, but worked perfectly alongside Tolosa, especially when he switched to baritone.

The first night had kicked off with a brief duo between guitarist Rauli Rönkä and drummer Lukas Lyyti. Rönkä's line is based in New York free jazz, and the duo's debut CD was recorded at Bill Laswell's place. There's too much emphasis on texture, too little on development of ideas, but a slinky set didn't offer much chance of that.

By contrast, the following night stumbled slightly with an overlong performance by Ilmari Quartet, who seemed to be given licence to run through every wrinkle of their debut *March Of The Alpha Males*. They come across stronger on record, as does Duo Nueva Finlandia, normally a pairing of veteran Teppo Hauta-aho with parent Eero Oja, though tonight an intriguing collision between the bassist and bass clarinetist Jussi Hakkila, two classical players who bring a new precision to free music, unannounced and involving.

The star of the second night was unquestionably saxophonist Juhani Aaltonen. With a tenor style that derives much more from Sonny

Rollins and Archie Shepp than from Coltrane, he teases out long melodic lines through and across some daring harmonies. Krokkers and drummer Tom Nielduud wound out the tie.

Like the opening night, the finale is another big band, this time trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah's Okapi, playing under the headline "Dispersions Of The Spirit Of Ra". Abdullah was an Ankara-based trumpeter in the late 80s and early 90s. For all his free playing, he has a trumpet sound still reminiscent of Louis Armstrong, clear, bright and expansive, and like Pops he sings as well. Though he lists himself largely to Sun Ra charts, joined on vocals by Monique Ngou N. Miles Griffith and the remarkable figure of poet Louis Reyes Rivera. The group is made up of close associates Jimmy Weinstein on drums, Mayana on guitar and Radu on bass. The fascinatingly eclectic DJ Jackson's are only the third pair of hands to touch the main all weekend. The horns are tenorist Saimi Washington, Robert Ruteberg on second trumpet and the impressive Frank Lacy on trombone. The music's a typical mix of abstraction and broad Fletcher Henderson swing. It was a coup to get them there — but it's a shame Abdullah couldn't have come with the same Electric Blues line-up as on the TUM record, featuring Billy Bang.

It made for a moving end to a fascinating two days. It was John Tolosa who voiced the hope that TUMFest might become a regular fixture. There'd be something for wrong if it doesn't. Every sound except silence. Bert Brecht didn't know shit. □

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'Like Jazz scholars wreaking havoc on underground rock'

NME on Tortoise

*'When it hits its stride this is the kind of music that gives the
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Wire on Konono N°1

Chicago based post-rock ensemble Tortoise return to the RFH following
their previous sold out show as part of Lee Scratch Perry's MeltDown,
2003. This is a double-bill with the 12-piece African Ensemble Konono N°1
whose repertoire draws largely on Bazombo trance music played in front
of a wall of speakers. Their music connects with the aesthetics of both
experimental rock and electronics.



The Bays, Barbieri & Torn

Fri 6 May QEJ 7.45pm

The Bays are a live music phenomenon and this project is particularly
close to their hearts. They explore their dance music roots with two
musical heroes - David Torn, who David Bowie called 'the Yo-Yo Ma of
electric guitar,' and keyboardist and founder of 80's cult band Japan,
Richard Barbieri, now Grammy-nominated with his project Porcupine Tree.

ABYSSINIA INFINITE

FEATURING EJIGAYEHU 'GIGI' SHIBABAW

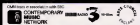
Tue 17 May QEJ 7.45pm

Abyssinia Infinite, a cross-cultural collaboration
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+ Special guests

Thu 28 Apr QEJ 7.45pm

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Sat 16 Apr QEJ 7.45pm



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8/4 **SUNN O))) + JOHN WIESE**

9/4 **DRAG CITY LABELNIGHT FEAT. JOANNA NEWSOM + ALASDAIR ROBERTS + SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE**

10/4 **JAGA JAZZIST + SHINING + FRANCO SAINT BE BAKKER + TRIDSK**

10/4 **THE BLDDO BROTHERS + WHITE CIRCLE CRIME CLUB**

11/4 **EFTERKLING + TIMESBOLD + MONADE + PATRICK WOLF**

12/4 **MILLIONAIRE + SICKBOY**

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Subcurrent is part of Scotland's experimental music partnership along with:
Le Weekend (Toibost), Inital (The Archer), free rad(CA)s (CCA), Kill Your Tired Nation (CCA)

Private View

13 May 7.30pm, Jerwood Space, SE1 Free event

KURT SCHWITTERS - URSONATE PERFORMED BY JAAP BLONK

A limited number of tickets are available from the BBC Ticket Line: 020 8576 1227

Gallery Show

14 May - 3 June, Jerwood Space, SE1 Free entry

Including work by Ashley Brierly, Gage Kagel, Levin Lieberman, McLaren Raster-Noton & Schwitters - plus artist talks, tours and workshops

Concert 1

22 May 7.30pm L90 St Luke's, EC1

ROBERT ASHLEY - THE WOLFMAN

performed by Joel Ryan and Ron Nourigat

PETER ABLINGER - IEAOV PART 4 "FÜR JOHANN MICHAEL FISCHER"

performed by Raster-Noton

MAURICIO KAGEL - ACUSTICA

Tickets: £10/EK Jerwood Box Office 020 7638 8881 (Mon - Sun, daily, 10g bag fee)
www.bbc.co.uk/subcurrent (reduced bag fee)

Concert 2

29 May 7.30pm L90 St Luke's, EC1

YASUNAO TONE - NEW WORK

Raster-Noton artists:

OLAF BENDER (AKA BYETONE)

FRANK BRETSCHNEIDER (AKA KOMET)

CARSTEN NICOLAI (AKA ALVA NOTO)

SIGNAL

Tickets: £10/EK Jerwood Box Office 020 7638 8881 (Mon - Sun, daily, 10g bag fee)
www.bbc.co.uk/subcurrent (reduced bag fee)

Closing Event

3 June 7.30pm, Jerwood Space, SE1 Free event

JOHN CAGE - WILLIAMS MIX

A limited number of tickets are available from the BBC Ticket Line: 020 8576 1227

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Cut & Splice

13 MAY - 3 JUNE 2005

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Focusing on the gap between idea and experience, between abstract concepts and their relation to the tangible, DOTS AND LINES considers the analytical, performative and documentary nature of music as written document and code. It throws into relief our very cultural of what constitutes the musical experience and explores the complex dialogue between live sound and media art forms.

www.sonicartsnetwork.org
www.bbc.co.uk/radio3

Artists Talk 2pm, Jerwood Space, SE1
The Wire presents an interview with
YASUNAO TONE 20 May

Online Exhibition & Resource

A specially curated Dots and Lines website
www.sonicartsnetwork.org
www.bbc.co.uk/radio3

Broadcasts

21 May, 28 May, 11 June
BBC Radio 3, News and Newsnight, Radio 4

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LUIGI NONO

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| WE 13/04/05 | KARATE + OW |
| SA 23/04/05 | SENKING + PITA + B. FLEISCHMANN + BANO
(SHAKS + BEATS + 10) |
| SA 30/04/05 | COR FUHLER & CORKESTRA |
| TH 05/05/05 | HENRY GRIMES TRIO
FEAT. MARLENE CROPELL & ANDRÉ CYRILLE |
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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

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Left: Wolf Eyes make some noise at Subcurrent. Right: Bronx funk queens ESG gatecrash the Triptych Festival



UK festivals

CHELLENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

CHELLENHAM

Packed six day festival over the May Day bank holiday weekend including a series of live films and performances by Dnette Coleman and Herbie Hancock. Highlights include Christine Tobin, Markus Stockhausen, Ken Vandermark, Dnette Coleman's two bass quartet, Bobby Previtt, Joshua Redman, Herbie Hancock Quartet and more. The film programme includes The Dnette Coleman Trio live in 1966 and Steve Lacy - *Left The Bandstand*, *On The Road* with Elroy Eskin, *Andrew Parris* and Jim Black, *Red Firth's Story Across The Border*, and Don Byron: *Mark Don't Walk*. Cheltenham various venues, times & prices. D1242 227979, www.cheltenhamfestivals.org.uk

LOVEBYTES

SHEFFIELD

Annual festival of New media and electronic arts. This year's electronic music strand includes a rare UK performance by Spanish artist Francisco López. Thomas Köner's Ambient meditations on natural decay, and data gathering sound project Gulibition, aka Vietnamese artist David Berthold, Wernhard Lachner and Anders Pieper. Sheffield various venues, 14-16 April, www.lovebytes.org.uk

ONLY CONNECT

LONDON

Annual series of new works and collaborations. Kicks off with Radiohead's Jerry Greenwood's new composition for The BBC Concert Orchestra (25 April), and the South in Wales premiere of a new soundtrack to classic surf movies (30). London Barbican, D20 7638 8891, www.bbcbarbican.co.uk

SUBCURRENT

GLASGOW

This annual festival curated by The Wire's David Keenan comprises psychodellia, free folk, noise

and improvisation, with Tony Conrad, Wolf Eyes, Double Loops, Fursaco, Cut De Sac, Decoder Pinga vs Smack Music 7, Es, Kermellist Yasvot, Kiva, Family Underground, Horotagija, Virgin Eye Blood Brothers and Avarus. Saturday afternoon features screening of films by Tony Conrad and some improvisations by ad hoc combinations of the festival's performers. Supported by The Wire Glasgow CCA, 21-23 April, D141 352 4900, www.cca-glasgow.com

TRIPTYCH

ABERDEEN, EDINBURGH & GLASGOW

Eccentric festival featuring Alasdair Roberts, Cut Power, ESG, The Fall, Herbie Hancock, Jon Tye, Juan Atkins, Juana Molina, Kathrin Stockhausen (who will present his piece *Kontakte*, Octophone and his recent *Mitwuchs-Groß* and *Mitwuchs-Abschied* in darkness), Laurie Anderson, LCD Soundsystem, Maher Shalal Hash Baz, Money Mark, Prince Buster, Sam Prekop, Savage Period, Television

Personalities and more. A film programme includes gang warfare feature *Warriors* with a live HipHop score, *The Howlin' Wolf Story* and the Marcus Gervy documentary *Look For Me In The Whirlwind*. Aberdeen, Edinburgh & Glasgow, various venues, times & prices. 27 April-1 May, D670 22 1116, www.triptych05.com

VINCENT GALLO ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

UK

The actor, musician and director puts together the month's instalment of the All Tomorrow's Parties festival on England's south coast. Line-up includes Gaila Harrell, PJ Harvey, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Swallow, James Chance And The Contortions, Prefuse 73, Buck 65, Lydia Lunch, Jayce County, Isapt, The Zombes, The Magic Markers, Gang Gang Dance, John Fox, Ted Curson, Alti Ramapo, Peaches, Olivia Tremor Control, Seak: Lesz and more. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 22-24 April, D20 7734 8932, www.atpfestival.com

International festivals

DISCO-BABEL

FRANCE

One day event in the French capital featuring Charles Hayward, Ghedalia Tazartes, David Ferenc, Grimo, Elurt, Albert Marcovec, The Chap Plus DJs, merchandise and more. Paris Mains D'Ouvres, 2 April, www.discobabel.com

DOMINO TEN DAY

BELGIUM

Annual ten day event featuring an eclectic mix of sounds including Rhythm & Sound with Paul St Hilaire, Ektatizmus Neubauer, Tissa, Joerna Neuwens, LCD Soundsystem, Surti D'Jill, Jaga Jazzet, John Wiese, Jennie Little, Mercede, Six Organs Of Admittance, Alasdair Roberts, Subtle, Boom Bip, Fog, The Wire Sound System and others. Brussels Ancienne Belgique, 6-14 April, www.dominotens.be

FEBIOFEST

CZECH REPUBLIC

Film festival showcasing new music films featuring John Zorn's *Masada*, Lighting Bolt, Carols Curtains, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Jon Mitchell, Festival In The Desert and others. Prague Village Cinemas Ardeš, 31 March-8 April, www.febiofest.cz

IDEAL

FRANCE

French festival spotlighting outdoor minimal musics and culture from so-called "micro-stations". Among others, the two days feature performances by Charlotte Gainsbourg, Tony Conrad, State Of Saboteur, Mitch & Mitch, NSK's Peter Mikar (8 April), and Ektatizmus Neubauer, The Balanescu Quartet and Hyenne MKF performed by Carl Michael Van Houssouet, Wire's Edward Graham Lewis, John Duncan and Left Eighen (9), Nantes Le Lesz, 8-9 April, D0 33 2 4012 1434, www.idealnouveau.com

ONKO MARATHON

USA

Two four-hour events put together by composer Carl Stone featuring improvisations from shifting line-ups drawn from: Otomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, Ichiraku Yoshimizu, Harumasa Toki, Aske Takamasa, Takamasa Nobukazu, o.blast, Stone and Elliott Sharp. New York Japan Society, 1-2 April, 7pm, www.japansociety.org/events

ROADBURN

NETHERLANDS

"Europe's foremost underground festival for stoner rock and doom", now in its tenth year. On the Eds Heavy Stage: Electric Wizard, High On Fire, Alabama Thunderpussy and Samy B. On the Space Rock Stage: Space Ritual, Bravi Barks And The Bess, Astrocity and Ultram. On the Heavy TDS Stage: Huk, Josiah, Hygro 69 and Vic Du Morte's *Idiot Prayer*. VPRD provides live coverage on www.vgro.nl/Tilburg/013_9_April/, www.roadburn.com

Special events

BOB COBBING EXHIBITION

UK

A celebration of the recently deceased composer performance poet put together by Jennifer Peel and Phil Davenport with a soundtrack compiled by David Toop. The event is at the Barry Test Festival. Barry Art Gallery & Museum, 22 May, www.testfestival.com

MORTON FELDMAN:

THINKING IN SOUND

NETHERLANDS

A weekend of performances devoted to the great, subtle giant of the US avant garde by the event, *Ensemble*, the Barton Workshop and pianist Ken Weinberg. Works include the complete piano works, the five hour *String Quartet A*, *The King Of Denmark*, *Why Patterns?* and *For Philip Guston*. Utrecht Theater Kikker, 7-10 April, www.theaterkikker.nl



Jeanna Newton and Sam Prekop in London

gusts. London The Spitz, 26 April, £5, www.upsettherhythm.co.uk

GEORGE HASLAM'S FREETIME
UK free jazz saxophonist's Progue quartet on a three night run with different guests each night. Guests include trombonist Paul Rutherford, trumpeter Steve Watersman, pianist Richard Leigh Harris, bassist Steve Kershaw and drummer Steve Harris. Abingdon Road Room, 1-3 April, 8pm-late, hometown.aol.co.uk/sigajazz

CHARLES HAYWARD
Ex-Thrs beat drummer plus avant rock trio Giddy Motors and folk improvisations from multi-instrumentalist duo Mike Adcock and The Wires. Clive Bell, 7 April, London Spitz, www.spitz.co.uk

HIGH ON FIRE
"Equal parts molten metal and earthquake panic". New Metal giants take on the UK. Milton Keynes Woughton Centre (26 March), Esher Cavern (27), Peterborough Mt Lounge (29), Bradford Ritz (30), Glasgow Nice 'N' Sleazy (31), Manchester Ritz & Grape (1 April), Wrexham Central Station (2), University Liverpool (3), Nottingham Rock City (4), Birmingham Bar Academy (5), www.hightime.net

IBIS + JABU + ESQUILAX
Harcourt Restale's self-assembled by Godfather's Justin Broadrick's new project and Metal Ibis Esquilax. Birmingham Medicine Factory, 20 April, www.capsule.org.uk

BILLY JENKINS
Inspired ramblings from the jazz-blues guitarist. London The Spitz, 19 April, 7pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA
Is (or so) of the best European improvisers. London The Red Rose Club, 3 April, 8pm, 020 7263 7265

MASAJIKI KURUMAYA SENSEI
Japanese Taiko metal drummer appears as a guest of European folk ensemble, Mogenkyo Taiko Drummers. Edinburgh The Queen's Hall (8 April), Glasgow The Trannyway (9)

HELMUT LACHENMANN + IANCU DUMITRESCU
Five BBC invitation concert featuring innovative contemporary composition performed by London Sinfonietta. London LSO St Luke's, 13 April, 7:30pm, free tickets from 020 8576 1227 or radio.techno.net/bbc.co.uk

JEANNA NEWSON + SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE

Grind 22 year old singer-songwriter/harpist opposite the visionary US duo of Ben Chasny and Chris Consens. Bristol Trinity Arts (1 April), London Queen Elizabeth Hall with Altsick Roberts and White Magic (2), www.dragcity.com

LUIGI MONO
London Sinfonietta and BBC Singers perform an evening of works by the Italian avant garde composer. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 27 April, 7:45pm, £21-£55, 08700 606096, www.lusig.uk

PREFUSE 73
The eclectic HiHop producer with full group plus. Seattle and DJ Kieran Heblon. London Scala, 7 April, 020 7833 2022, www.espritnewseers.com

SAM PREKOP
The Sea And Cake leader performs with an all-star avant pop group which includes members of Chicago Underground Ios and Ios and Country. London Bush Hall, 26 April, 7:30pm, £9.50, 020 8222 0144, www.aatgrouse.com

RYTHM AND SOUND + EGYPTIAN LOVER + REPHLEX'S BRAINDANCE PARTY + BOGDAN RACZYNSKI
Minimal club from the Berlin Basic Channel duo, alongside debut UK gig from Los Angeles HiHop fusion outfit and Dling from London's Rephlex massive. London Koko, 1 May, 8pm-4am, £15, 0870 1544040, www.eatyourveins.com

STEREO TOTAL/JEANS TEAM/ COBRA KILLER
Berlin "Anticonformist" tour. London 93 Feet East (20 April), Edinburgh The Venue (21), Dublin Whelms (23)

TAURIPS TULA + VIRGIN EYE BLOOD BROUGHTERS + HERITA LUSU ASSA
Free folk touring project featuring drones and loops from David Keenan on guitar and Heather Leigh Murray on vocals and pedal steel guitar supported by US gurus post-industrialists and Finnish free folk group. Oxford Port Mahon (13 April), Leeds Pockhose with Hottotogits (14), Bristol Dea Cinema (15), Brighton Meritown Theatre with Blood Stems (16), Newcastle Norton Tower (17), London Batten's Boulevard (18), Sheffield The Grapes (19) www.volcanicjazz.com

TRIOSK
Australian trio mixing live jazz and electronics. Bristol The Louisiana (26 April), Edinburgh The Bongo Club (27), Glasgow Sub Club (28), www.triosk.com



Club spaces

BACK IN YOUR TOWN
Monthly improv evening put together by Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Weiss and John Cosset. Extraordinary vocalist Phil Minton performs solo plus the house quartet. London Red Rose Club, 21 April, 8:30-11pm, 020 7263 7265

BOASTING
Monthly improv night on a boat. This month: a quartet of Tony Marsh, Gary Dool, Nigel Cosmides and Nick Stephens, Gary Dool, G, Nick Rowan, Miranda Foot and A Sonar, K Kob; and poetry from Rachel Patchmouth. London Yacht Club, 4 April, 8pm, 020 8670, 5094, www.boast-ing.com

BREAKIN BREAD
Dirty breakin club focuses this month on live Hip-hop with Ghost, Kashmir and Verb T plus guest DJ's Disordia, Timber and guest 8-Bay crews Newcastle City Krew and Funk 'N' Disorderly. London Rhythm Factory, 30 April, 10am-4am, £5-£9, 020 7375 3774, www.breakinbread.org

CBCE MICROPLEX
West Country alternative venue has the following music related events: film night focusing on the work of John Cassavetes and artist Arthur Russell and the exclusive outdoor art. Jorvik (4 April); Fugus plus special guests (13); psych-folk outfits. Tarpaulin Lads, Virgin Eye Blood BroUGHTERS and Herita Lusu Assa (15), Cul De Sac with Domo Scurro (30) Bristol City, www.cbcecinema.com

FREE RADICALS
Improv monthly celebrates its fourth birthday with international noise/rock MTK featuring musicians from Norfolk, The Netherlands and New York on turntables, electronics, samples, junk and saxophones respectively. They will be joined by Polish bassist Rafal Mazur and play opposite the club of Nathaniel Catchpole and Eddie Priest. London Red Rose Club, 6 August, 8pm, £5-£13, 07778 363492

GENERAL
This month's name for The Bohman Brothers' informal improvised and experimental weekly bring your own drink and be prepared to sit on cushions. This month: Steve Serfati & Fyfe Hutchins, Dominic Lash & Nathaniel Catchpole and Sudden Infant (11 April); film/performance night with Samantha Rebelo, Angharad Davies, Harry Lloyd, Nicholas Chinn, Lynn Loo, Matt Davis, Rob Flint, Karen Miza, Brad Butler and z'ev (18) Mondays (not first Monday of the month), 8pm, £4/£5, 07904 087409

THE GLUEROOMS

Monthly evening of experimental live performance. Osme 167 teams up with Katscan for a noisy jam, laptopper Chris Heaver performs with Kay Grant, and unpredictable everyday-object players The Bohman Brothers, and U Tenslow And The Guppies Dog presents Mobile Phone Orchestra (30 March). Paul Taylor of The Fluges performs his Notebook Poetry (27 April), London Amersham Arms, 8pm-midnight, £3, www.gluerooms.com

INTERGRATION
An evening of some exploration, electronic music and visual stimulation from Nurse With Malice member Colin Peter, Paul Bradley, The Other Collaborators, Dances Operating System and Illuminati. Preston St Peter's Arts Centre, University of Central Lancashire, 30 April, 8pm, 01772 465062, www.twentyherz.co.uk/intergration

KLINKER DALSTON
Off the wall club featuring Gunguis Fortuna, Laria Montagna, Martin Bowers and Martin Galdrons (1 April); Jacques Fossidine and the Italian meeting featuring the quartet (9); Julia Oyley, Nony And, Ryan Marshall and Ann Day plus Paul Hill and Hugh Metcalfe (8); Remote Views (12); Georg Grater and Friends (15); London Under Construction (22); Paul & Hugh and Bicycle Clip Sex (26). London The Sussex, Tuesdays and Fridays, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 8806 8216, www.klinkerclub.info

KLINKER NUHHEAD
South of the river department of the Improvised club. MTK featuring Matt Wright turntables, Nair Neiminger, Tom Harin and Rafal Mazurs (7 April); Paul & Hugh Do Consciousness II (14); Georg Grater/Thomas Maueheller/Perido on segs/guitar/laptop (21) John Edwards and Kay Grant on double bass and electronic vocals (28). London The Wy House, Thursdays, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 7732 0222, www.klinkerclub.info

ONGAKU: ENJOY SOUND
Japan meeting featuring the quartet (9), a film by Edith Pasquier and an illustrated lecture on Philadelphia jazz from Tom Pasquier. London The Horse Hospital, 10 April, 8pm, www.orgakusound.com

OXFORD IMPROVISERS
Oxford Improvisers Orchestra (Oxford Ovaco Xchange Gallery, 14 April, 8pm, £5/£3); and Pete McPhail/Dominic Lash/Matcolin

Adkins/Chris Hills (Modern Art Oxford, 21 April, 5-5pm, £3/£2) www.adprovisers.com

RAY'S JAZZ AT FOYLES

Monthly session of free improvised music concerts continues with US fingerpicking guitarist Duck Baker and his reinventions of folk themes. Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 28 April, 6pm, free, www.foyles.co.uk

RE-MOTE CLUB

New East London live music monthly focusing on experimental noise, psychedelia and electronics. This month, Kuroi Mitsu of Victoria The Bear's new project Dragon Or Emotions, psych rock from Guapo and Leeds move the Birds Of Delay. London Barber's Beunder, 15 April, 8pm-3am, £5, www.remotoclub.co.uk

THE SPRAWL

Self-styled sonic buffet of electronics. Live performances by Düsseldorf musician Antonell Electr. and We're Breaking Up. Also Twohousanddvd label boss Michael Redford performing on analogue electronics. Guest DJs are Max Kravur from Cologne label hahc and Kosmosch Of Tokyo Margu. London Chateaufhouse Bar, 13 April, 7.30-11.30pm, £4/£3, 020 7608 0858, www.sprawl.co.uk

Incoming

THE BAYS + RICHARD BARBIERI + DAVID TORIN

Improvising quartet supported by former Japan keyboardist as a Contemporary Music Network tour. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (6 May), Manchester Zoo Arts Centre (7), Brighton Dome (8), Norwich Playhouse (9), Oxford Zodiak (10), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (11), www.cmmrns.org.uk

ORNETTE COLEMAN

UK 75th birthday concert with quartet and guests. London Barbican, 2 May, 7.30pm, £15-£30, 0845 120 7550, www.barbican.co.uk/contemporary

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CUT AND SPICE

UK

Festival of electroacoustic music and expanded composition put together by Sonic Arts Network and supported by The Wire. Concerts include Jaap Blom performing Nurt Schmitt's Unsonate, Robert Ashley's The Mother; Mauricio Kagel's Acorica, works by Luciano Torin, Carsten Nicola, Frank Bredschneider and Olf Bender and a reedition of John Cagge's Williams Mix. An accompanying exhibition at the Jewood Gallery displays original artworks of Schwartz's score, works by Fluxus, Cage scores, The Source magazine and Reader-Nator works (14 May-3 June). London LSO St Lukes and Jewood Gallery, various times & prices, www.sonicartsnetwork.org, www.bbc.co.uk/radio3

DISONANZE

ITALY

Fifth edition of this annual Italian electronic festival supported by The Wire. This year's artists include Riccardo Villoso, Rikha Howard, Granular Synthesis, James Holden, Jamie Uddell, Matmos, Alter Ego, Nathan Faux, Ryoji Ikeda, Speedy J. Dimberman, Thomas Nünor, Magda, Umkehr, Wang Lin, Xosad, Del, Ganscarino and more. Rome Palazzo Dei Congressi, 19-21 May, www.disonanze.it

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ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE

CANADA

This year's line-up includes Iku Mori/Zena Parkes, Anthony Brandon/Fred Fish, Wolf Eyes, Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet, The Serebros, Christine Wodrascka, The Kels Cline Singers, Kid Koola/Martin Tétreault, Plastic People Of The Universe with the Agnès Obertons, Philip Jeck/Jonah Schaefer, Thurston Moore's Dream Alien Unit and many others. Victoriaville various venues, times & prices, 19-23 May, www.fimqap.ca

FREEDOM OF THE CITY: MAY DAY!

MAY DAY!

UK

Annual free improv festival celebrating

homegrown talent featuring Steve Beresford/Joe Williamson/Roger Turner, Lee Cudhill & Neil Metcalfe, Sylvia Haller/Caroline Kraebel/Veryan Weston, Evan Parker/John Edwards/Mario Mattos/Neil Metcalfe/John Ranganoff/John Russell, Paul Rutherford/John Edwards/Mark Sanders and others to be confirmed. London Red Rose Club, 1 May, 3.30pm, 020 7263 7265, www.mamemiduo.com

HERBIE HANCOCK

The pioneering keyboardist with his acoustic quartet featuring Gary Thomas, Scott Colley and Teri Lyn Carrington (17 May), with special guests from past and future electronic projects (28); and with The London Symphony Orchestra featuring music from the album Gershwin's World (29). London Barbican, 7.30pm, £15-£30, 0845 120 7550, www.barbican.org.uk

LE WEEKEND 05

STIRLING

The Wire continues to sponsor this event, now in its eighth year, with a programme co-curated by David Keenan. UK 05 promises to be as gritty and challenging as ever, ranging from free jazz to electronic improvisation. Four evenings feature Paul Flaherty/Chris Corsane Duo, Wally Shop The Zoo, Kouskouzo (26); The Dream Alien Unit, Murmur/Dash, David Focke & The Dn (27); The Flurs Arne Hennison (28); Rude Prase (28) and Connor Tabbith's New Jazz Septet. Mochele Hausmusik and Suislaw No Fane (29). The daytime programme features talks and workshops. Stirling Festival, 26-29 May, day ticket £12/£8, two-day festival pass £22/£14, full festival never ticket £40/£26, 01786 274000, www.leweekendfestival.com

MUSIC LOVERS' FIELD COMPANION

UK

Wire-sponsored three day festival featuring outdoor acts ranging from free folk to early works by composers of the avant garde. A four hour improvised set by Japanese guitarist Kaiki Hara entitled Secret Of Music (20 May); Vibacordist Orchestra, My Cat Is An Alien,

Takelissa Kossig's Catch-Mix 05, Luc Ferrari's Zoologues 3 performed by Nmpregel, Shaj and others (21); and Jarek, Nmpregel, Shaj Inaba, Kyoko No Intention (22). Gateshead The Sage, 20-22 May, www.thesagegateshead.org

TORTOISE + KONONO NO 1

Chicago post-rock Tortoise supported by Congolese amplified thumb-piano tronie masters. London Royal Festival Hall, 24 May, £20-£17.50, 08703 800400, www.rfh.org.uk

ULRICH/SCHERGER KALEIDOPHON

AUSTRIA

Impro annual featuring Henry Gonsky/Marilyn Crispell/Andrew Chin, Radin, Gony Hemmingway Quartet, Philip Wachsmann/Michael Surco/Paul Lytton, Paul Rutherford's Rolfelt, Francis Quartet, Günter Christmann's Mel D'Anchive, Feldwork, Daniel Studer's Iarus, Alexander Von Schlippenbach, Abelie Abstrakt & prof/On, Ulrich/Schberger Jazzstrolch, 5-7 May, 00 43 7288 6301, www.jazzstrolch.at

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SWITZERLAND

The Sen Ra Afters party twice, alongside Egberto Gremont, Sternbach Switzerland, Frédéric Le Jurek, Keli 2 Fastuaz Quartet, Sushoazzu and others. The concerts are open air and warm waterproof clothes and Alpine shoes are recommended. Poschmo, 5-7 May www.uncool.ch

Out There items for the May issue should reach us by Friday 1 April

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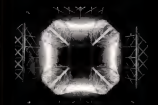
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Epiphanies

Electrelane guitarist Mia Clarke is fired up by the tumbling, eclectic energy of Dutch anarcho-improvisors The Ex

The Ex, with Ethiopian saxophonist Getatchew Mekuria



I first met The Ex in Hollywood, California. It was late September 2004 and the Dutch quintet were completing the last leg of a US tour with Han Bennink, working their way up the coast from Los Angeles to Seattle. My group Electrelane had been invited as the support on the eight-show run. Although we all caught up with The Ex rather late into their 25 years of activity – my first recollection was their 1999 collaboration with Tortoise for Korkurek's *In The Fishbowl* series – we were looking forward to seeing them live, and this joint tour provided the opportunity to experience their energetic punk rock at close quarters.

In a city such as Hollywood, where backstabbing and big bucks are the cause and effect of everyday life, The Ex's powerfully delivered, lyrically political set at the Troubadour on Santa Monica Boulevard provided a striking juxtaposition to the world of hostile capitalism and shabby bombast existing outside. Like all their fans, I admire the diligence with which The Ex have maintained their values since they formed in August 1979: relentless recording and touring; self-distribution and release of records (complete with posters, booklets and other relevant reading); their uncompromising ethics and advocacy of community – within the alternative music circuit, politically, and through the squat movement in which the members have been active throughout the years. You learn by example, so to experience The Ex's commitment and straightforwardness on a day-to-day basis during that tour was inspiring and exciting for us. Despite hefty generational and musical differences between our groups, a feeling of mutual respect and unity struck up, and Electrelane were invited to celebrate The Ex's 25th anniversary in Amsterdam that coming November – a great honour and great fun.

The Ex's celebration, referred to as Een Plezante Aanglegenheid (A Pleasant Affair), was held at Amsterdam's main venue, the Paradiso. The spacious rooms and high ceilings of this old, converted church

provided a perfect location for the weekend long party that ran not inside. Just as The Ex's music has evolved from the straight-up anarcho-punk of 79 to the divergent patterns of sound on 2004's *Turn*, the array of musicians that the group selected to perform at their anniversary mirrored their range of reference: Gold Blade's raw Mancunian punk; Tamou's Moroccan Gnawa rhythms; John Butcher's saxophone improvisations. While drinking nettle tea in guitarist Terrie's house on the morning of the show, sitting next to a blind 80 year old drummer from Ethiopia, The Ex's decision to encourage such an assortment of musical styles struck me as ambitious, but in keeping with their good natured way of challenging conformity by throwing everything into the melting pot.

Inside the Paradiso, everyone was in high spirits. The evening began with a crowd gathered around Silent Block's mass of pasting tables, onto which an assortment of household appliances and self-made instruments had been rigged up like an enormous metatramp. Sounds were tweaked and pulled, hammered and strung out as though made of malleable substances, the trio's improvisations interlocking with intuitive precision. No strangers to collaboration and improvisation themselves, The Ex encouraged group members to mingle for one-off live sets. Ethiopian saxophonist Getatchew Mekuria interrupted ICP's glorious sonic trickery halfway through, sauntering onto the stage in beautiful raincoat robes while teasing deep hollers and harsh barks from a shiny tenor. In the next room, film maker Jim Cohen projected some recently filmed 16mm footage of freeways and airports onto a screen as Ex guitarist Andy Moor and electronic composer Yannis Kynakides provided a spontaneous soundtrack of bubbling feedback and hissing guitar strings.

Experiencing the force of Nepent's show was a highlight of the night. Like Silent Block, the Boston group, fronted by metal sculptor Jason Sanford,

contort the relationship between man and machine by fashioning instruments out of scrapyard junk. Two fretless guitars, each weighing in at 30 pounds, were made out of the top of a 55 gallon oil drum and a disassembled VCR. The drum kit was an incredible piece of work: circular saw blades soldered to bicycle wheels and sections of ventilation duct that were vocally pummeled in a configuration of unusual tempos. The sight of people spinning and grinning as the group's sweat and sticks came flying through the air was an absolute treat.

The Ex organised the event so that there was always a consistent flow of music, dance or spoken word being performed in at least two different rooms at any given time. Non-stop interactive entertainment came from Wilf Plum of The Dog Faced Hermans and ex-Nepenthes guitarist Andy Kerr, who displayed an admirable amount of stamina as The Living Ex Jukebox by playing any requested Ex song for 50 cents a pop.

As I wandered into the main hall and leaned over the balcony to watch Terrie and Andy's distinctive improv banter, playfully interspersed by Paul Lowins and Tony Buck on drums, the personal importance of the evening abruptly hit a keynote. All the great things that The Ex have stood for over the last 25 years were tumbling together and coagulating in a fury of zine swapping, new ideas, record exchanges, collaborations and adventurous music. It was a feeling of intense joy that reminded me of the Rugal and Lydia Lunch shows I sneaked out of the house to attend during my mid-teens – the kind of enthusiasm, support and dedication to independent music that encouraged me to pick up a guitar in the first place. I expect that many other people in the audience were feeling the same way as they listened to Terrie's stringently sweet notes shoot through the body of the building with jumpy velocity, like disco rolling across terrace. □ Electrelane's new album *Axes* is out next month

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With next month's May issue, all *The Wire's* subscribers will receive a free and exclusive copy of *Marke B 05*, a new compilation CD celebrating Berlin's thriving electronic music culture

Berlin's Marke B event is a two-day festival showcase for the city's network of electronic music labels, artists and producers. To tie in with this year's event, which takes place at Berlin's Maria Am Ufer space on 27 and 28 May, organisers Gudrun Gut, Thomas Fehlmann and Daniel Meteo have compiled a special CD featuring tracks by musicians who will be appearing at the event and that have been taken from the catalogues of participating Berlin labels, including ~Scape, Morr Music, Kitty Yo, Monika Enterprises, Shitkatapult and more. This exclusive CD will be given away to all *The Wire's* subscribers with copies of next month's issue. For more information on the Marke B initiative go to www.markeB.de, www.oceanclub.de

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SOUL JAZZ RECORDS SJR LP 111

NEW THING! SJR LP/CD 110

Soul Jazz Records latest release New Thing! tells the story of Deep Jazz in the USA. Post-Civil Rights, Post- Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, Post-John Coltrane, this album shows how radical Jazz musicians redefined themselves and their music to present a new Black American music that encompassed Jazz with Eastern music and philosophies, space travel, classical music, ballet and African music alongside other American musics such as Gospel, Funk, Soul and Blues. **Release Date:** March 20th SOUL JAZZ RECORDS



MAULAWI US LP/CD 26

Soul Jazz Records are re-issuing this lost classic Deep Jazz album originally recorded in Chicago in 1973. Mixing heavyweight Funk and Deep Jazz this one off-album by cult artist Maulawi has become one of the hardest records of its kind to track down. Originally released on the tiny Strata label in Detroit with a pressing of 1000 copies.

As featured on New Thing!

Release Date: April 18th UNIVERSAL SOUND



HANNIBAL CHILDREN OF THE FIRE US LP/CD 27

Originally a self-financed release by Hannibal Peterson, this features heavyweight Deep Jazz uniquely mixed with strings, voices and more. Written as a themed classical album and now a serious collectors piece.

As featured on New Thing!

Release Date: May UNIVERSAL SOUND



TRAVIS BIGGS CHALLENGE US LP/CD 28

Travis Biggs worked in Detroit in the 1970s at the same time as the Tribe musicians collective (Wendell Harrison, Marcus Belgrave, Phil Ransin etc) and is a similar blend of Funk, Jazz and other elements. Originally released on the self-financed T & B label and featuring "Tibetan Serenity".

As featured on New Thing!

Release Date: May UNIVERSAL SOUND

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